BUSINESS / B1

Peso still rising; currency now close to 47 level

NEWS / A3

Minority to block bill allowing Pagcor to enter into joint venture deals

BUSINESS / B1

Singapore-based business space provider invests P7.5B in RP

NEWS / A2

GO's Senate bets' jingle: 'Hello Garci'

NEWS / A3

Hanging bridge in Batangas falls; 32 Girl Scouts hurt

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
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Zubiri gets 'Boom Tarat Tarat' jingle for a song

By Nini Valera
Entertainment

KAHIT WALANG PLATAPORMA, BASTA MAY KANTA!?!

EVEN IF THE JUDGES were tone deaf, "Boom Tarat Tarat" would never win an Awit award.

But because the novelty song is so silly, it has

ZUBIRI/ A11

GMA orders Melo report released

WATCH YOUR STEP

HOMERUN on the economic front, says a delighted President Arroyo. LYN RILLON

But media won't have access to document

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE EUROPEAN UNION and the United Nations' special rapporteur may expect to receive on Monday copies of the Melo Commission's report on the extrajudicial killings, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said yesterday.

The disclosure came on the same day that police and the human rights group Karapatan announced the killing of leftist student leader Farley Alcantara II in Camarines Norte on Thursday. Alcantara was shot dead by a lone gunman who managed to get away. *(See story on Page A8.)*

Gonzales said in an interview that President Macapagal-Arroyo gave him the go-signal on Tuesday to transmit copies of the "thick document" requested by the European Commission, the EU's executive body, and UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston.

"We're all after the truth, so we will have

GMA ORDERS/ A8

NINO JESUS ORBETA/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

NO MAN'S LAND: Barangay Maipon in Guinobatan, Albay, at the foot of Mt. Mayon was obliterated under boulders and mud.

REMING'S RUINS REVISITED

Time to get life and living back on track

By Rosario A. Garcellano and Jocelyn R. Uy

(Last of three parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

Project Editor
Rosario A. Garcellano

"WE NOW HAVE TO STOP looking for the missing," Jean Llorin said late in January, in the course of addressing the question of how in God's creation the exact number of those who perished in Albay under the onslaught of "Reming" could be arrived at.

After coordinating with barangay officials, collecting data, poring through records, consulting maps, asking displaced families at evacuation centers about the whereabouts of their neighbors (and even children where their parents were)—after all these painstaking efforts, it becomes imperative to assume that the missing are dead. (Records of Albay's Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office as of Jan. 15 listed 961 casualties—510 dead and 441 missing.)

A heartbreaking thought, but a necessary step to focus on the living and get life (or what now passes for it) back on track.

TIME/ A6

Economic surge elates GMA: 'Seize the moment'

By Michael Lim Ubac

HEARTENED BY A SURGE OF THE stock market and the peso, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday called on Filipinos to "seize the moment" and said not even the heated election campaign could slow down the country's economic recovery.

Ms Arroyo said the stock market advance, the performance of the peso and the peak in overseas workers' remittances "are clear manifestations that our economic homerun is in play."

"Not even the intense politicking brought about by the forthcoming elec-

ECONOMIC/ A8

Edong on romancing Loren: Ridiculous

By Cynthia D. Balana

DID THEY OR DIDN'T THEY?

Sen. Edgardo "Edong" Angara said the question was both ridiculous and unfair, as he addressed persistent rumors that he was having an affair with opposition stalwart Loren Legarda, the ex-senator who is seeking to return to the Senate in the May elections.

According to Angara, who is running on the rival administration ticket, the rumor started about three years ago, spread via text message and coffee shop talk. He said he decided to ignore it thinking nobody would believe it.

But the rumor was resurrected last week just as the campaign for the May elections started.

On Thursday, Angara faced the question squarely and told INQUIRER editors over dinner it was time to put the rumor to rest.

"It's really ridiculous. It's not true," he said.

Asked why he never bothered to deny it before this time, Angara said: "Because the more you comment on it, the more it will spread."

Asked how he got romantically linked to Legarda, a mother of two who is estranged from husband, former Batangas Gov. Antonio Leviste; Angara said some people in the Senate may have misconstrued their closeness.

He said that as a senior senator he was regularly consulted on certain issues by Legarda, from the time she was a neophyte

EDONG/ A10

Palace moves fast to save nurses' American Dream

By Michael Lim Ubac and Jerome Aning

MALACAÑANG IS MOVING FAST TO save the "American Dream" of more than 17,000 nurses who passed the scandal-smeared 2006 nursing licensure examination.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday expressed regret at the decision of the US-based Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS International) to require passers of the June 2006 exam to retake its leaked portions before they could work in the United States.

The CGFNS has urged the government to "provide opportunity for a retake" of the compromised test portions so that the passers could qualify for a VisaScreen certificate, a document required for tests leading to the practice of nursing in America.

"I would like to take this opportunity to express that I am saddened by the fact that the visa-hold has been employed on the deployment of our Filipino nurses as a result of the nursing exams of last year," Ms Arroyo said while addressing an international science conference in Malate, Manila.

"I have instructed the Secretary of Labor to immediately look into the findings of the (CGFNS) and seek all forms of relief from the visa hold and appeal for the

PALACE/ A19

Cesar Montano joins Team Unity vice Petilla

By Jerome Aning, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Nikko Dizon and Dona Pazzibugan

MOVIE ACTOR CESAR "BUBOY" MONTANO, 45, will replace Leyte Gov. Jericho Petilla in the administration's senatorial lineup.

Petilla gave up his slot in the administration's Team Unity just a day before the administration ticket's launch in Cebu today to run for reelection as governor.

Montano and Petilla showed up at the Commission on Elections office at about 7 p.m. to formalize the substitution. Comelec officials said there was no violation as long as Montano was being nominated by the same party.

Section 14 of Comelec Resolution No. 7799 allows substitution of candidates who withdraw until May 7.

"It just landed on my lap. I was pulled in," Montano told reporters at the Comelec office.

Though he knew he was on the long list, it was still a surprise because the administration coalition had already made its choices for the ticket and he was not on it, the actor said.

"I am very blessed, very pleased and honored that I was the one chosen among the many really good candidates," he said in a mixture of English and Filipino.

Comelec employees scrambled to

CESAR/ A10

LYN RILLON

PARTNERS **Singapore's Ascendas Pte. Ltd. and RP's Net Group have a P7.5-billion joint project covering five office buildings at The Fort. Singapore President S R Nathan (right) is greeted by Ascendas Pte. Ltd. Chair Lew Syn Pau at the groundbreaking rites of its fourth building on Friday. At center is Lilia de Lima, director general of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.** ***(Story on Page B1.)***

EZ2
⑰ ⑦

FOUR DIGIT
③ ⑦ ⑥ ④

Mid-Day **SUERTRES** Evening
⑧ ③ ① | ② ⑦ ⓪
(All in exact order)

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Second FrontPage

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. Eastern section of Southern Luzon will have cloudy skies with light rains. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/02/16/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

GO bets to use 'Hello Garci' tune

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE "HELLO GARCI" RING TUNE JUST WON'T go away.

The 17-second snippet of President Arroyo's infamous wiretapped conversation with former Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano which was cleverly mixed into a surprise musical hit of 2005 is making a comeback this year with the Genuine Opposition making it the group's common jingle throughout the campaign season.

Senatorial candidate Panfilo Lacson is optimistic that playing the "Hello Garci" tune in between the individual campaign jingles of GO candidates would remind voters of the massive cheating that marred the 2004 elections and how the culprits have not yet been made accountable for their actions.

"We want people to be reminded that there was massive cheating in the 2004 elections participated in by no less than the sitting president. It is clear that there were issues then that have not yet been resolved. Everybody knows who was talking and who was listening," Lacson said.

He said the tune is not really meant to gain more votes but to make the people aware that they should remain vigilant in safeguarding their votes.

During a break in his campaign sortie in Manila, Lacson played the 'Hello Garci' ring tone which used 50 Cents' "In The Club" song as backdrop, one of dozens of version of the politically-inspired song heard on mobile phones, television, radio and even vehicle horns nearly two years ago.

It became so popular that the government threatened to jail those playing the "Hello Garci" tune in public which only made it a bigger hit.

Lacson said GO was making an updated version of the "Hello Garci" tune which he hoped would be a welcome break during lulls in the campaign season. "It should at least break the monotony, but I'm confident it will be a successful revival of a classic," Lacson said.

"It is meant to remind the people that unresolved issues must not be dumped and forgotten by way systematic cover-up and massive use of government resources to buy out the purveyors of truth," said Lacson.

While Team Unity has disparaged GO for its single-minded pursuit of the ouster of President Arroyo, Lacson said: "It (election cheating) is by any measure a valid campaign issue since it involves integrity and accountability of public officials."

Lacson said accountability should be a key consideration by voters in choosing their candidates. "If you are elected, you should be accountable for your actions. You just can't get away with cheating in an election or pilfering millions of pesos in public funds in the fertilizer scam," Lacson said. "We were hoodwinked before, we will not be hoodwinked again."

Politics casts shadow on PMA homecoming

By Vincent Cabreza, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*, and Alcuin Papa and Christine Avendaño

BAGUIO CITY—TRY AS HE MIGHT TO REstrain himself from promoting his candidacy when he addresses the Philippine Military Academy alumni homecoming this weekend, Senate President Manuel Villar already has the edge over his rivals.

Villar's name and face are plastered throughout the stretch of Loakan Road that leads to the PMA's Fort del Pilar.

Villar is the guest speaker at this year's PMA Foundation Day and organizers have already advised him to refrain from campaigning.

His campaign volunteers, however, rushed on Thursday to install his posters right beside the welcome streamers which alumni members of PMA Classes 1965, 1977 and 1989 raised on Wednesday.

"We were not instructed to do this, but we know he is speaking at the PMA so we assumed the posters are not violating anything. Are they?" one of the volunteers said.

No other national candidates have followed Villar's lead so far.

PMA officials yesterday said they intend to strictly enforce the directive of Armed Forces Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. to keep military camps like Fort Del Pilar, the home of PMA, free of political campaigning.

They said they would confiscate campaign posters, banners and leaflets brought into the camp and warned soldiers in active service found violating Esperon's directive that they could face court martial.

Vehicles entering the PMA will be searched and campaign materials confiscated, said PMA spokesperson Capt. Dennis Solomon.

"We would like to make this … some sort of a family day and just pay a homage to the alma matter," he said.

WELCOME BACK!!
MATIKAS '83

REELECTIONIST Senator Manuel Villar Jr. can take it easy during the PMA Foundation Day today because his face and name have been plastered on billboards leading to the academy in Baguio City. VINCENT CABREZA

But even PMA Superintendent Maj. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig said preventing overt campaigning during the homecoming programs on Friday and Saturday may be "a tall order."

The PMA is expecting about 6,000 alumni members and their families, said Solomon.

But Maligalig said they expect a much bigger attendance this year because of the elections. Many candidates are honorary members of various alumni classes and are expected to join the event, he said.

Villar is an adopted member of PMA "Masikap" Class of 1977 which is one of the classes hosting the event.

As it is, the choice of Villar is already raising eyebrows among some alumni, according to PMA graduates interviewed by the INQUIRER.

"If the military is really serious about keeping out of politics, then why is a politician who is running for public office in the next elections the guest speaker?" a PMA cavalier asked. "Cavalier" is a formal term that PMA graduates use to refer to each other.

Villar's "Masikap" class is one of the host classes of the event to be held at the grounds of Fort del Pilar, home of the PMA.

Another graduate said Villar's presence and the "political flavor" of the homecoming were "sure to cause more disillusionment" among the new graduates.

"Some of the new batches are already disillusioned. This is sure to add fuel to the fire," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Solomon stressed there was a procedure and process followed in inviting guest speakers. He said Villar had been invited as early as December 2006.

A source said however that when it came out that Villar was running in the opposition ticket, word reached Villar's camp that he was being "disinvited."

It was only last week that Villar was told that the invitation would stand.

Another politician honorary member expected at the homecoming is Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero, who was adopted by the Class of 1987. Villar and Escudero are running in the opposition slate. Another opposition candidate who is also expected to attend is Loren Legarda.

Other PMA graduates vying for Senate seats are Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, Zosimo Paredes all three members of PMA Class 1971, and Navy Lt. Antonio Trillianes of Class 1995.

Honasan and Trillanes, who are both being detained on coup d'etat charges, will miss the event.

Lacson has opted to skip the homecoming this year out of respect, he said, for the PMA's alumni day.

"I choose to spend [the campaign] rest day to practice what PMA taught me—lead by example by leading my supporters in the removal of my campaign posters in places outside the common poster area designated by Comelec," he said in a text message.

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3 opposition bets to block Pagcor bill

By Norman Bordadora

WARY THAT ADMINISTRATION ALLIES IN Congress would pass controversial bills, particularly that seeking to extend the franchise of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., three senatorial candidates of the opposition will take a break from their campaign sorties to attend a special Congress session scheduled on Monday.

Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano, Deputy Minority Leader, yesterday told the INQUIRER that he, Minority Leader Francis Escudero of Sorsogon and Tarlac Rep. Benigno Aquino III, will all attend the special session.

"They might pass something that should not be passed," Cayetano told the INQUIRER.

He said the House minority will try to block the passage of the bill extending the franchise of Pagcor which will expire in 2008.

"Why are they in a hurry to pass this bill when it can be passed when Congress resumes session in June?" Cayetano asked.

He said the extension of Pagcor's franchise that would allow the government's gambling firm to enter into joint ventures with private outfits might be used by the administration to raise funds for the election campaign of its candidates from potential joint venture partners.

"We admit that these are just rumors. But elections need not only be fair but must also be perceived as fair," Cayetano said.

"This might become another fertilizer funds scam," he added.

Cayetano said the House minority was willing to pass the administration's urgent bills on the last day of the regular session early this month.

"But they wanted to tackle the Pagcor bill first," he said.

Cayetano said that instead of tackling the other proposed bills on the agenda apart from the Pagcor bill, the House leadership decided to adjourn.

"What is with the Pagcor bill that is so urgent?" he asked.

Aside from the Pagcor bill, the Anti-Terror Bill is also expected to face stiff opposition.

Militant party-list groups such as Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela are expected to oppose the passage of the anti-terror legislation for allegedly being oppressive.

Aside from the Pagcor bill and the anti-terrorism bill, other measures that will be tackled in the special session include those on tourism, tax amnesty and the planting of a billion trees.

CA dismisses Leviste bid to stop new probe

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE COURT OF APPEALS HAS REJECTED THE bid of former Batangas governor Jose Antonio Leviste to stop the reinvestigation of his case for the killing of his long-time aide Rafael de las Alas, thus paving the way for the murder trial.

In denying Leviste's motion, the appellate court said Leviste failed to prove his contention that the prosecution had been biased against him, which amounted to "injustice and deprivation of liberty without due process of law."

"Wherefore, the application for temporary restraining order and writ of preliminary injunction is denied," the CA said in its Feb. 15 resolution.

Leviste earlier accused the Department of Justice, which conducted the reinvestigation of his homicide case and later upgraded it to murder, of prejudging the case.

"However, we find such grounds to be speculative since the facts herein do not show a clear and unmistakable right to which petitioner is allegedly entitled to and which may be protected by the injunctive relief," the court's Special Eighth Division said.

But the court also directed respondents Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco, Makati Judge Elmo Alameda and De las Alas' heirs to comment on its resolution. It also ordered Leviste to reply to the comment.

Sought for comment, Leviste's lawyer Manuel Singson said he would file a supplemental petition before the appellate court seeking a new injunction.

Singson said Leviste's petition which the court resolved only touched on the reinvestigation, but the lawyer said other events have happened since it was filed, specifically the filing of a murder charge against the former governor.

The Makati City Regional Trial Court earlier ordered the DOJ to conduct a reinvestigation of Leviste's homicide charge upon the request of De las Alas' family.

Leviste then filed a petition before the appellate court seeking to stop the DOJ from proceeding with the reinvestigation, and to stop Alameda from acting on the prosecutor's recommendations.

But before the Court of Appeals could rule on the petition, Velasco issued a resolution upgrading Leviste's homicide charge to murder, citing "treachery, cruelty and premeditation" in De las Alas' death.

The prosecutor also said Leviste had conspired with others in the killing of De las Alas, and said the crime scene had been tampered with before the police arrived.

Hanging bridge falls down; 32 Girl Scouts hurt

A HANGING BRIDGE IN SAN JUAN, BATANGAS collapsed on Friday, injuring 32 Girl Scouts who were crossing it, officials said.

The girls, all high school students at the Batangas Eastern Academy in San Juan town, were crossing the hanging bridge in Barangay Mabalanoy during a hike when its steel cables snapped, the school's assistant principal Lee Galit said.

The girls dropped about six meters to a sandy, grassy riverside near a public market, from where people rushed to their aid, she said.

At least 18 of the teenagers, including seven with fractured hands and legs, received emergency treatment at a nearby hospital and were then transferred to another one, hospital staff said.

The other injured girls were taken to different hospitals.

"We were not aware about the state of the bridge, since people use it regularly," Galit said.

Galit said the 32 girl scouts from their school left the campus past 7 a.m. for a hiking expedition around town.

She said the hikers crossed the river via the concrete bridge in the other part of the town.

"It was when the girls were crossing the hanging bridge in going back to the school when the steel cables snapped," she said.

She said the victims suffered bruises, contusions and fractured bones. "This is one unfortunate incident," she said.

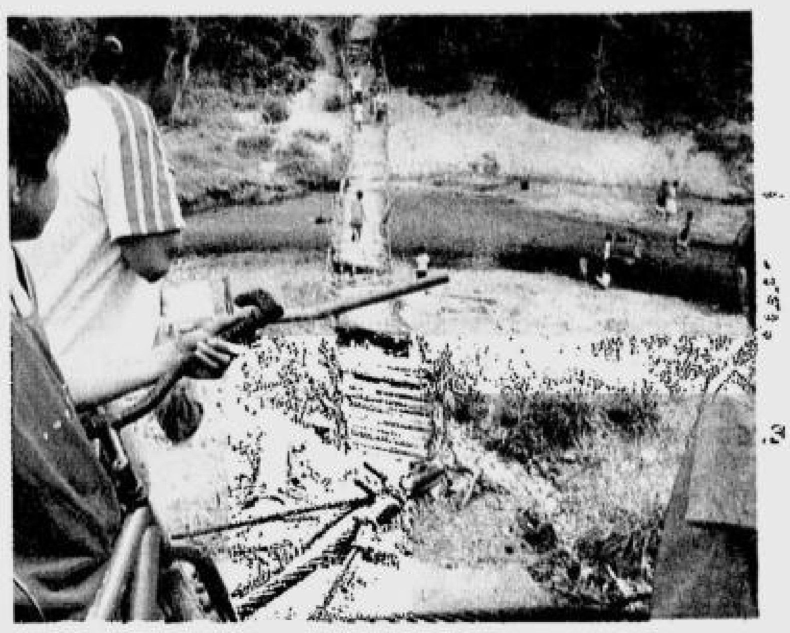
Senior Supt. Edmund Zaide, Batangas police director, the age-old suspension bridge could not bear the weight of the students who all crossed it at the same time.

The hanging bridge on Lawayi River, with an estimated span of 50 meters, connects the village of Mabalanoy and the town proper. It has wood slabs as walkway and hangs about 20 meters above the dried-up river.

Zaide said residents and stall owners at the San Juan Public Market rushed to the area and helped the victims after hearing an unusual thud.

"It was really fortunate that none of the students were killed. They only suffered bruises on their bodies," Zaide said in a mobile phone interview.

Lucita Castillo, a market vendor, said the hanging bridge is about 50 years old. *Marlon Ramos and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon with AP report*



THE fallen hanging bridge of San Juan, Batangas, where 32 members of the Girl Scout of the Philippines were hurt when it fell into the river 18 feet below.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, February 17, 2007
6th Week in Ordinary Time
Seven Founders of the Order of Servites

1st Reading: **Heb 11:1-7**
Gospel: **Mark 9:2-13**

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain. There his appearance was changed before their eyes. Even his clothes shone, becoming as white as no bleach of this world could make them. Elijah and Moses appeared to them; the two were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter spoke and said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say; they were overcome with awe. But a cloud formed, covering them in a shadow, and from the cloud came this word, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him." And suddenly, as they looked around, they no longer saw anyone except Jesus with them.

As they came down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man be risen from the dead. So they kept this to themselves, although they discussed with one another what 'to rise from the dead' could mean.

Finally they asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the Law say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus answered them, "Of course, Elijah will come first so that everything may be as it should be... But, why do the Scriptures say that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be despised? I tell you that Elijah has already come and they have treated him as they pleased, as the Scriptures say of him."

Commentary

These are people of faith: Abel, Enoch, Noah, and all those who pleased God and believed in him and will inherit the justice of God. Are we people of faith, offering the sacrifice that God wants: obedience to the Word of God, service to the least of our brothers and sisters? Do we obey, at least so that we might be saved from the destruction of evil?

Jesus invites us into the presence of God. We are allowed to pray with Jesus and to see through his body, into the light of God. We hear the voice of God, testifying to Jesus. And we are commanded, "Listen to him"—no one else. Jesus is the only reality that we must perceive the world through. And we are to follow the Son of Man even if we do not understand all that is required of us, or who Jesus is. We are to live on faith now.

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Hope and despair for Guinsaugon survivors one year after mudslide

GUINSAUGON, SOUTHERN Leyte—Ricardo Sibunga works tirelessly under a steady downpour, his sweat and tears mixing as he and 20 men and women race against time to finish a small chapel on a muddy patch that was once a thriving farming village.

ANNIE Cagis offers a prayer at a makeshift cross erected over a muddy hill overlooking a desolate landscape that once used to be the farming village of Guinsaugon. AFP

They work with manual tools hauling sand and bricks from a river bed one kilometer away, a token sacrifice for a monument to honor over 1,000 of their friends and relatives entombed by a mudslide that engulfed the village of Guinsaugon in St. Bernard town on Feb. 17 last year.

"God spoke on that day and we were all silenced," Sibunga, 36, told AFP. "We lost everything to the mud—our families, everything. All we have now is hope that it never happens again."

"That day, I lost my wife, my 9-year-old daughter Geraldine, my 8-year-old son Geric and my infant son Lauki," he said. "It is very painful to think that you can be robbed of everything in a blink of an eye." Sibunga says he remembers tending his small farm on the outskirts of Guinsaugon when a massive portion of the nearby Kan-abag mountain collapsed, sending a deadly torrent of mud, boulders and debris cascading down its slopes.

21-M cubic meters

It is estimated that a total of 21 million cubic meters of debris rumbled down the mountain, covering an area of 323 hectares, including Guinsaugon, a progressive farming village that prided itself on its abundant harvests of rice and other crops.

The Philippine government, with the help of foreign governments and US troops, mobilized a massive rescue effort in the wake of the tragedy unprecedented in the country's history.

International aid arrived, and several countries including Malaysia, Taiwan and Spain dispatched experts to help in the dramatic unfolding of events, but the task proved to be too difficult and after a month the area was officially declared a no-man's land.

Only 128 bodies were plucked from the mud, while about 500 people were rescued. No one knows exactly how many people died, and the provincial government officially places the toll at some 1,000 dead and missing.

The village census, however, placed the number of residents at over 3,000.

Religious pilgrimage

Sibunga's children were among the 200 pupils trapped inside the primary school, which was never found and believed lying under some 30 meters of debris.

Annie Cagis, 32, was in Manila when the tragedy struck. Employed as a maid, she and her husband watched in horror as the news unfolded on television.

They rushed home only to confront their worst nightmare: their two children, aged nine and seven, were among those in the school. Eleven of her relatives were also missing, presumed dead.

"Sometimes I wish I had died with my children," Cagis said. "There is not a day that I don't cry and think of them."

She says her distraught husband has returned to Manila to escape the pain. But she comes to this desolate landscape every day, to offer prayers and light candles for the children whose bodies were never recovered.

More painful

"It was more painful because they never got a proper burial. No last rites to send them away," Cagis said, her voice choking.

Guinsaugon has become a religious pilgrimage of sorts for the local folk, with weekly masses held on a clearing across from Guinsaugon, near a river that seems to widen every day.

A giant wooden cross erected in the area months after the tragedy was washed away by recent floods and officials are now building a more permanent structure.

The government has restricted forays into ground zero but relatives and survivors have been given permission to construct a small chapel which would serve as the memorial where the names of all who perished would be listed.

Working on rotating shifts, the survivors say it is a form of therapy, a process of moving on and finally bringing closure to the sad incident.

They are remembered

"At least we will give them a final resting place. Their souls can converge here on this site, and they know they are remembered," says Junuoto Siega, 30, who lost his wife Teodora and daughter Leica.

"It is important people know they have not been forgotten."

Siega says that for months he drowned his sorrows in nightly alcohol binges. He is sober now, he says, and focusing on helping to finish the chapel.

Perhaps, he adds, once it is completed he will move elsewhere and forget what happened.

Several kilometers away in the town of Saint Bernard, 330 new houses funded by the Japanese and Australian governments and the Red Cross have been built for survivors.

Over P200 million in funding has poured into the area for schools and health care systems. Community leaders have organized disaster awareness programs, and children's laughter fills the air.

But inside the small houses made of steel and cement-treated plywood many of the survivors seem to drag themselves through each day as they drift in and out of a dazed depression.

40 psychiatric cases

"We've had really bad cases where people just give up. That is why it is important to let them know the government has not left them behind, that people still remember," said provincial Governor Rosette Lerias.

There were 40 psychiatric cases reported in August last year, 18 of which were classified as "severe." They are being handled by a 32-man stress debriefing team on round-the-clock stand-by, Lerias said. *AFP*

15-year-old Palawan boy saves 'dugong'

ROXAS, PALAWAN—A 15-YEAR-OLD BOY saved a dugong, an endangered marine species, stranded on the shore of Roxas town.

Mark Florende was on the beach rinsing nipa leaves last Jan. 24 when he noticed a big sea creature struggling for life, apparently stuck in shallow waters.

He had never actually seen a live dugong (scientific name: Dugong dugon), which is related to the extinct Steller's Sea Cow and the Manatee. But he had seen its picture on a poster put up by environment conservation advocates at the *sitio* of his coastal town.

He knew what to do

So when he moved to take a closer look, Mark knew right away what it was—and what was to be done.

Bigla kong nakilala yung hayop bilang Dugong mula sa poster *sa* Sitio. *Mukhang naisatranded sa* low tide." (I recognized it immediately as a dugong from a local poster. It looked like it was stranded by the unusually low tide) said the young boy.

He immediately reported the presence of the stranded dugong to his grandfather, Ramon Tindog, who alerted authorities—including the Roxas-based Population, Health and Environment (PHE) office of the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Philippines).

Shallow waters

The dugong inhabits shallow waters of the Indo-Pacific, where sea grass is most abundant. It is the fourth member of the order Sirenia, alongside three Manatee species. A fifth member, the gigantic 8-meter long Steller's Sea Cow (Hydrodamalis gigas) was completely wiped out in 1768, just 30 years after being discovered. Like the Steller's Sea Cow, the dugong lives long but breeds slowly—making it vulnerable to local eradication.

VOLUNTEERS gently tow the stranded dugong to deeper waters. The boy who found the dugong has never seen a live dugong but he had seen a picture of the sea creature on a poster in his village. PHOTO C/O WWF-PHILIPPINES

A rescue team of local volunteers and WWF staff was immediately dispatched.

The stranded female dugong measured 1.8 meters in length and weighed in at 200 kilograms. Finding her unwounded, the volunteers gently hoisted a rope around the dugong's midriff and started towing her to safety.

Don't kill dugongs

We were taught by the PHE that it is forbidden to kill dugongs because they play an important environmental role, said Tindog in Tagalog.

Through the combined efforts of WWF and the local government, locals from Philippine coasts are indeed becoming more aware of the endangered status of many species.

Young Mark also participated in the rescue, soothing and helping guide the animal to deeper waters.

After a few tense moments, the dugong slowly swam off.

Amidst cheers, the team watched her disappear into Palawan's turquoise waters.

Prof. Flora Hizon dies

PROF. FLORA MERCADO HIZON OF LA LOMA, Quezon City and Pampanga died at 6:25 a.m. yesterday, Feb. 16, 2007.

Relatives, friends and colleagues of Hizon can pay their last respects starting Monday, Feb. 19 at Chapel 12-A 3rd floor, south wing of La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be announced later.

Hizon was a professor of the UST College of Pharmacy. She also served as an alumni association official for several years after her retirement.

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NPAs kill 2 cops in Mindoro

COMMUNIST REBELS IN MINDORO ORIENTAL ambushed a group of policemen who responded to a guerrilla arson attack yesterday, killing two officers and wounding two others, an official said.

Police officers were pursuing suspected rebels who burned two construction vehicles near Bulalacao town in Mindoro Oriental, when they ran into a rebel ambush, Senior Superintendent Agrimero Cruz said.

"It was a well-planned ambush and my men were caught by surprise, although they managed to fire back," he said.

Two policemen were killed and two others wounded, Cruz said.

The attack came a day after the New People's Army rebels ambushed a military convoy in Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte yesterday, killing an army engineer and wounding four others, an army official said.

The soldiers, members of the Army's 52nd engineering brigade, were attacked in the outskirts of Mabini town, said Col. Benito de Leon, chief of staff of an infantry battalion assigned to the area.

"They were on their way to remote Sitio Misoon to install a water facility under the government's Barangay sa Kalayaan project," De Leon told reporters.

Shortly before the ambush, the rebels warned village leaders not to allow the army to push through with the project. They threatened to fire on any soldier entering the village, De Leon said.

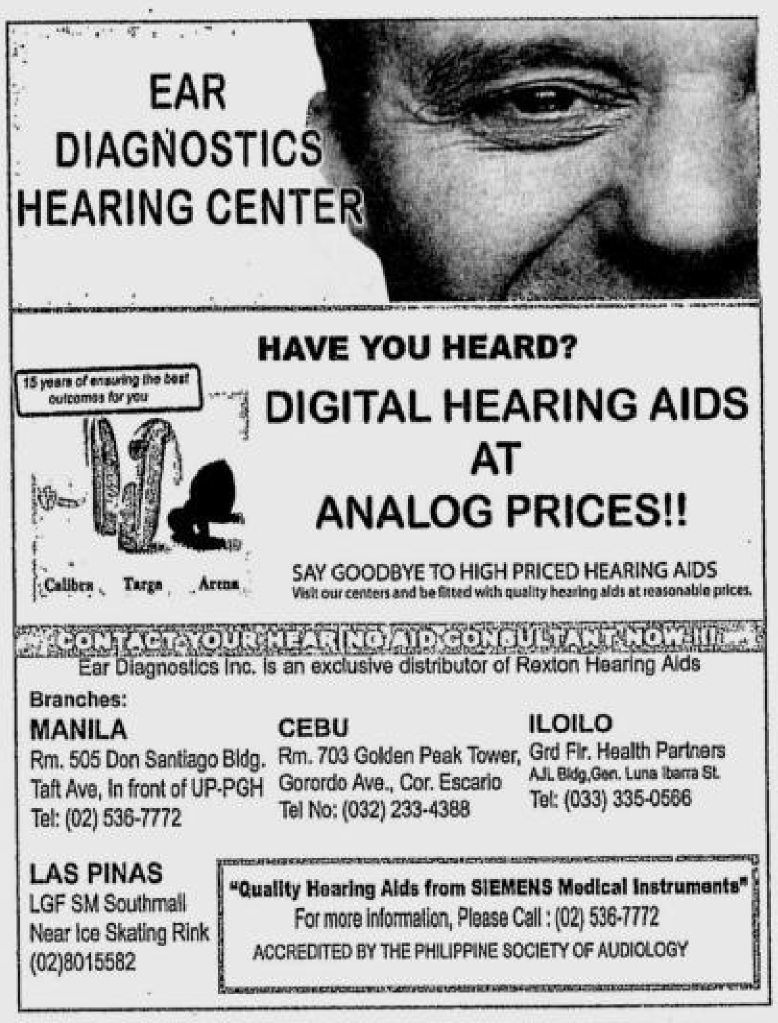
The rebels carted away three firearms.

Earlier this week, NPA rebels and government soldiers clashed in Davao del Sur.

More than 300 residents of Barangay Goma, Digos City, fled their homes on Tuesday as military assault planes and helicopter gunships pursued the rebels.

The Communist Party of the Philippines and its 7,000-member New People's Army has been waging a nearly 40-year Maoist guerrilla campaign.

President Macapagal-Arroyo suspended peace talks with the group in 2003, concluding that the rebels were not interested in a political settlement. *Jeffrey M. Tupas and Eldie S. Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao; and AP, AFP*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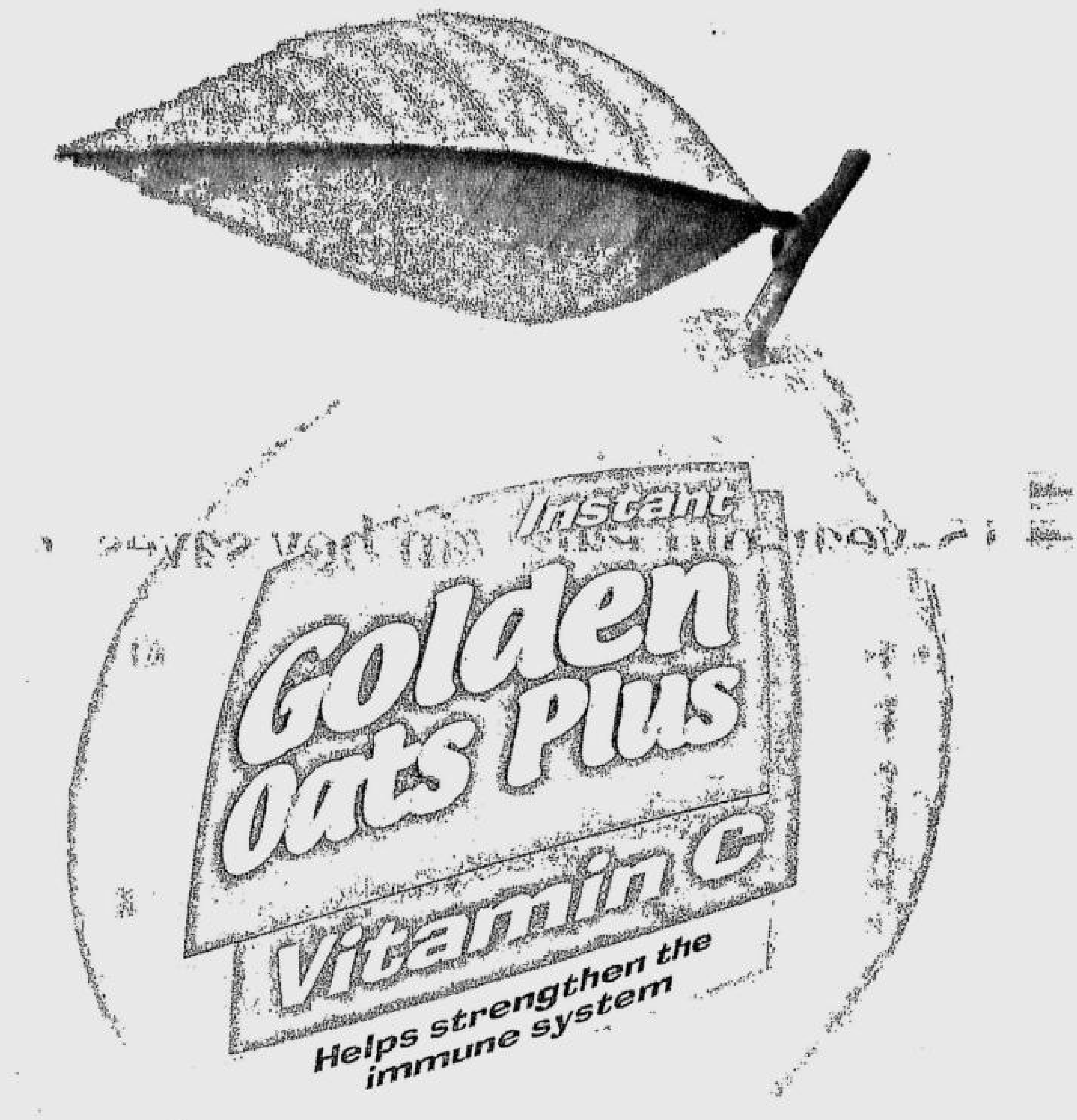
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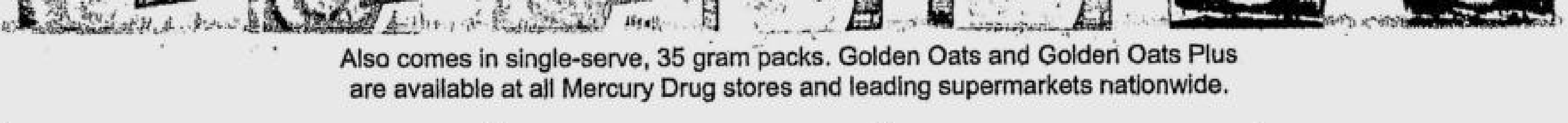

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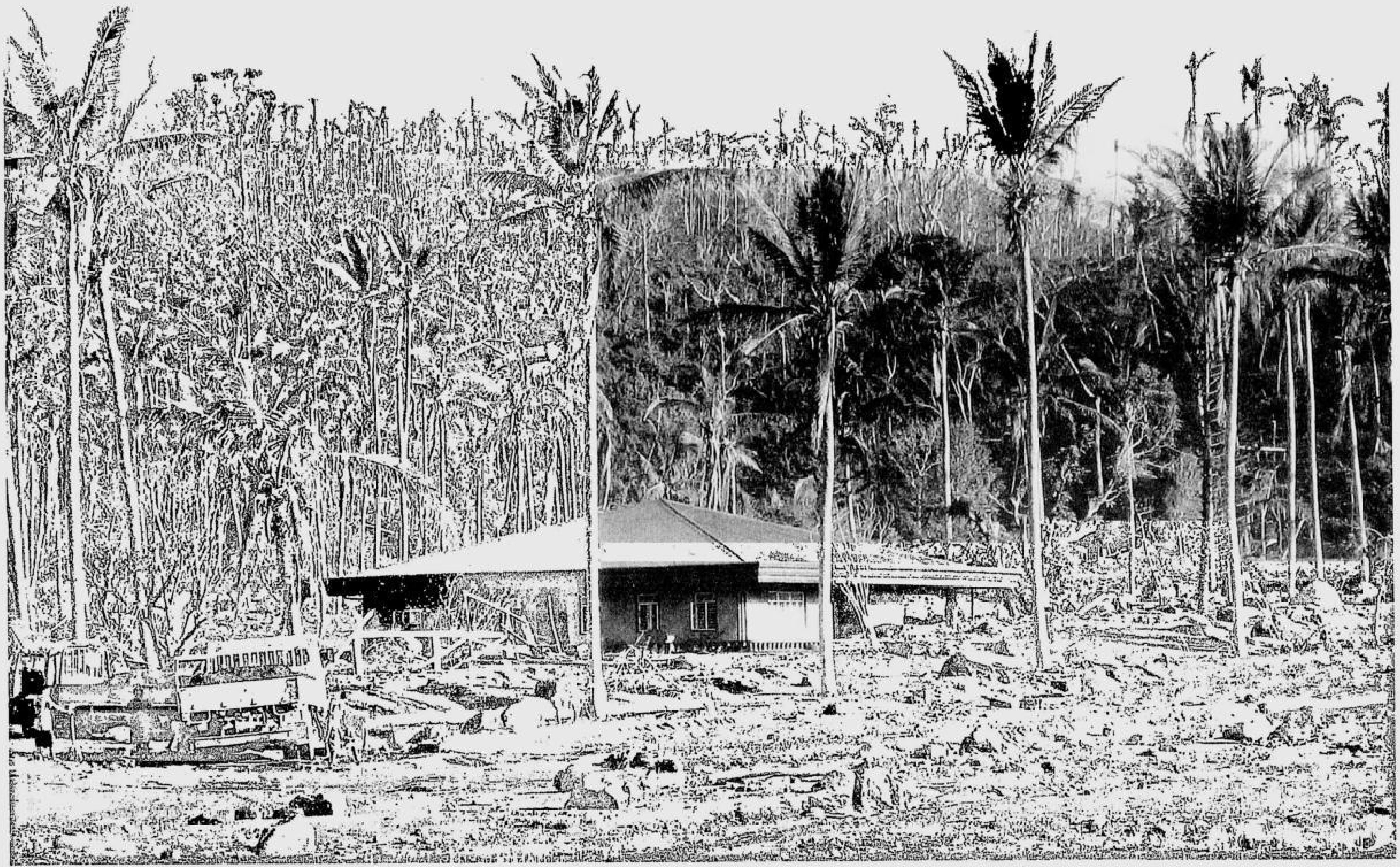


A HOUSE in Barangay Maipon, Guinobatan, sits buried almost to the roof in black sand and volcanic debris. Three men (at left) are dwarfed by the enormity of the devastation. NIÑO JESUS ORBETA/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

Time to get life and living back on track

From page A1

LLorin belongs to the Christian Life Community (CLC), an international movement/organization that is working with the "Church of the poor" and that recently marked its 40th year in the Philippines.

Among many dedicated persons, institutions and groups (for example, Tabang Bikol's local partner, the Bicol Movement for Disaster Response), CLC's Bicol arm is engaged in rehabilitation work in the region.

Llorin was born in Naga City (Camarines Sur) and raised in Guinobatan (Albay). She regularly travels back to Naga from her home in Quezon City, and more frequently now because of the relief efforts that she conducted even in her personal capacity, and, lately, stress debriefing sessions for the survivors.

She was in Naga when Reming hit. In its immediate aftermath, she visited family and friends in Albay, comforted the distressed and, with her trained eye, discerned the enormity of the work ahead.

System

Drawing from her long experience with CLC—where, she said, retreats and prayers inexorably led to work—Llorin sought to put order in relief operations that, because of the sheer urgency of need, often took on a helter-skelter nature.

"I would like some system in this" was how she talked about her approach, which she described simply as private individuals "partnering with government." Thus her work with, for example, Erwin Palencia, barangay captain of ravaged Maipon in Guinobatan.

On Thursday, Llorin was at the relocation center in Barangay Travesia, also in Guinobatan, to deliver the last of the relief goods brought by various donors. (Her home in Queborac, Naga, as well as her apartment in Quezon City, had been serving as drop-off points for donations.)

The "Oval"—actually the playground of the Marcial Rañola High School—is now housing 417 families from three barangays, 94 of them from Maipon.

Having been part of stress debriefing sessions elsewhere for adults and children with special needs, Llorin is currently arranging for a debriefing program—particularly the "Trauma Interrupted" workshop of artists May Datuin and Alma Quinto—for the families at the "Oval."

It's part of the "social preparation" that Llorin is engaged in, and she and her colleagues are now trying to "make the survivors participate in decision-making."

Here is an encouraging development in that direction: To settle the matter of who will get the donated blankets, the evacuees themselves decided on a raffle.

New life

A system is hopefully in place as a new life begins on the untouched meadows, verdant valleys and vast coastline in the westerly section of Albay.

According to plans, towns will rise in these uncharted territories away from what Llorin called the "dangerously beautiful" Mount Mayon, where coconut trees, rice, root crops and vegetables can thrive undisturbed by violent weather conditions and people can live without the risk of losing their lives, loved ones and homes to volcanic eruptions and mud avalanches.

They will also learn the rhythm of the trade and commerce of the more developed cities in the eastern side of Bicol, creating economic balance throughout the region that roughly 1.5 million people call home.

This was the picture Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzales drew in his mind long before Reming took its toll.

But the devastation has made the provincial government even more determined to implement plans of opening the countryside to communities most vulnerable to calamity.

"We have to build roads and bridges so we can move to the west, away from Mayon, where weather conditions are better," Gonzales told the INQUIRER.

Linking markets

If everything goes as planned and government funds allow it, Albay's economy may start to look up.

With the western side marked by a vast coastal area facing the South China Sea (a 150-kilometer stretch from the borders of Sorsogon to Camarines Sur), the province would be able to link markets with neighboring islands such as Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan, Oriental and Occidental Mindoro and the entire Panay.

"To the east of Legazpi, our nearest neighbor is Guam. But on the western side, we have the entire Philippine archipelago," Gonzales said.

He said the development in the western side would run parallel to the restoration efforts on the east coast of Albay, which bore the brunt of Reming's fury.

This time, the governor said, "extreme attention" would be given to building infrastructure, a flood control system, roads and bridges all "attuned to typhoons, mudslides and floods."

He also said protective systems to mitigate the effects of Mayon's eruptions would have to be worked on: "Now, we have to look seriously at how we construct our roads, bridges, irrigation systems, dikes. All of these must conform to the minimum standards to be able to withstand the forces of nature.

"Because of our weak strategy, neglect, and lack of investment in infrastructure and a flood control system, the consequences of the typhoon are much greater than they [should be]."

Stripped of defenses

Gonzales said Reming had stripped Albay of its defenses, leaving vulnerable areas exposed, so that even a little rain could have disastrous results.

"Perhaps Mayon's eruption in 1814 was devastating, but it affected only the surrounding areas and maybe 20 percent of the crops. But with Reming, every inch of the province suffered from wind, water, mud and Mayon debris," he said.

He continued his litany of Reming's unparalleled destruction: The floodwaters inundated commercial districts; obliterated roads and bridges; toppled electric posts and plunged the entire province in total darkness for nearly two months (as of late January, 50 percent of the power supply had yet to be restored); destroyed irrigation systems; and buried villages and rice, coconut and vegetable farms.

According to Emiliano Ortiz, provincial coordinating officer of the Department of Agriculture, 705 of the 23,000 hectares of farmland in Albay were lost to the mudslides.

Ortiz said Camalig suffered the most with 161 hectares covered in mud; Guinobatan, 110; Legazpi City, 102; and Daraga, 100.

So many things have yet to be done, and Gonzales is deeply concerned about the provincial government's capacity to rehabilitate Albay as soon as possible.

If more time is wasted, more Bicolanos may get trapped in poverty, he said, adding:

"That's why we are asking for support from the national government and international financial institutions that can help us prepare some mitigation programs."

Fresh land

But some farmers have begun tilling the land again, with local government units opening new areas for agriculture.

In the upland barangays of Bariis, San Francisco, Banquerohan and Cagbacong in Legazpi, tracts have been made available for rice and cash crops like vegetables and corn.

The city government has encouraged farmers to refocus from coconut farming to planting high-value crops and backyard gardening to cushion the impact of their losses, said Jess Kallos, who pegged the damage to crops at more than P20 million.

It has also distributed packets of vegetable seeds, bags of corn and fertilizer to get the farmers started.

"We have to resort to alternative crops because the total rehabilitation of our coconut plantation could take 5-10 years," Kallos said.

Emiliano Ortiz also raised the need for the city government to adjust its agricultural and livelihood programs.

"There'll always be typhoons in Albay. Farming should be focused [not on coconut farming] but on high-value crops because that's what Metro Manila needs," he said.

Heartbreaker

Pete Acarado, 45, was among the thousands of farmers reduced to tears on seeing what was left of their coconut plantations.

"It really broke my heart. The trees were my life; that's where I got the money to send my children to school," said the father of five.

Now, Acarado works as hard on new land opened by the government. He started planting corn in December; the crop will be ready for harvest in April and May.

Meanwhile, he said, he would have to borrow more money from friends and work double-time at his bookbinding shop near the Legazpi City Hall to make ends meet.

At the 11-hectare MMDA Village in Barangay Taysan, social workers and private volunteers keep out-of-job men and women busy with cooking and sewing demonstrations, film showings and beading workshops.

The construction of about 700 concrete houses, along with a small school, a barangay office, a health center and a playground, is planned, and a hectare will be reserved for crops, said Legazpi Mayor Noel Rosal.

He nurses the fervent hope that in six months, the village born from sorrow will become a thriving community.

REMING'S RUINS

Numbers paint a sorry picture

By Kate Pedroso
Inquirer Research

AFTER "REMING," STATISTICS from the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (as of Jan. 8) paint a sorry picture of Albay: Over 15,000 persons (more than 3,000 families) in 95 affected barangays still being evacuated; at least 112,000 "totally damaged" and over 100,000 "partially damaged" houses; and over P336 million worth of damaged roads, bridges, school and government buildings, and communication and water system facilities.

Reming also caused over P533 million worth of damage to crops, the most affected of which were rice crops (P93.5 million in damage). The coconut crop in the entire province was "practically damaged," directly affecting over 46,000 farm households.

Damage to livestock and poultry cost over P20 million. Most affected were chickens (P5.8 million) and pigs (P10.8 million), according to data from the PDCC (as of Dec. 19) and the official website of Albay (as of Jan. 16).

The Department of Trade and Industry and the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics both projected that the decline in the number of investments as well as in crop production would be more felt in the first two quarters of 2007.

Fertile soil

Albay is known for its fertile volcanic soil, which supports crops such as rice, corn, coconut, sugarcane and abaca.

In 2006 before Reming, BAS figures show that Albay harvested over 130,000 metric tons of palay and more than 40,000 metric tons of corn, and produced 126,653 metric tons of coconut and 67,630 metric tons of sugarcane.

It also yielded 8,620 125-kg bales of abaca during the first 11 months of 2006, according to figures from the Fiber Industry Development Authority.

Albay likewise harvested over 55,000 metric tons of other crops such as peanut, monggo, cassava, camote, tomato, cabbage, eggplant, calamansi and pili.

The harvest of major crops generally declined from their 2005 level, with only corn posting a 32-percent increase from 31,629 metric tons in 2005.

Palay production declined by 27 percent from the 179,467 metric tons produced in the previous year; the same was true for coconut production, which decreased by 31 percent from 183,246 metric tons in 2005.

Sugarcane production was almost the same—68,525 metric tons in 2005 and 67,800 metric tons in 2006.

Industries

Because of Albay's strategic location as both starting and end point of transportation facilities, as well as its natural resources, these industries had flourished—food processing, gifts and houseware manufacture, metal craft, weaving, woodcraft, ceramics and paper manufacture.

DTI says that for the entire 2006, Albay generated over P1.5 billion in investments.

Nearly 80 percent (or P1.2 billion) of this figure was recorded in the third and fourth quarters, but DTI says this was because these investments came in before Reming hit the province on Nov. 30.

Albay is also the site of historically important sites such as the Cagsawa Church ruins (significantly altered by Reming), the Daraga Church and the Liberty Bell.

With its host of natural attractions—among others, the Hoyop-Hoyopan Cave in Camalig and the Minaroso Caves of Batan Island, the Busay Falls in Malilipot, the Sogod beach in Bacacay and the hot springs in Tiwi, and the world-famous Mayon Volcano—its tourism sector was also one source of income.

From January to June 2006, more than 81,000 domestic and foreign tourists visited Albay.

Of the more than 4,300 foreign visitors, most came from the United States (827), Germany (491) and Japan (413). *Sources: National Statistical Coordination Bureau, Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, Fiber Industry Development Authority, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Tourism*

Erap asks court to let him campaign for opposition candidates

LAWYERS OF DEposed President Joseph Estrada asked the Sandiganbayan yesterday to allow him to campaign for opposition candidates in the May congressional elections.

The former film star, who was overthrown in a popular revolt in 2001, is under house arrest at his country villa in Tanay, Rizal, while awaiting the verdict on plunder charges, an offence that carries a life term in jail.

"He should have a sporting chance to argue on the choice of choosing between one who supposedly stole money and another who supposedly stole an election among other issues," said Rene Saguisag, Estrada's lawyer, in a motion to the antigraft court.

The reference was to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who took over from Estrada and then won an election in 2004 that opponents claimed was rigged.

Still popular among poor voters who swept him to power in 1998, Estrada is barred from receiving any visitors, particularly politicians seeking an endorsement from him.

Reuters

Noynoy tells GMA 'to do a Marcos'

By Norman Bordadora

TARLAC REP. BENIGno 'Noynoy' Aquino III yesterday urged President Macapagal-Arroyo "to do a Marcos" and allow captive Navy Ltsg. Antonio Trillanes' to campaign from his detention cell through media interviews.

Aquino, a senatorial candidate of the Genuine Opposition, said that ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos allowed his father, the late Sen. Benigno Aquino, Jr., to campaign from behind bars when the latter ran for a seat in the Interim Batasang Pambansa in 1978, the first national elections since martial law was declared.

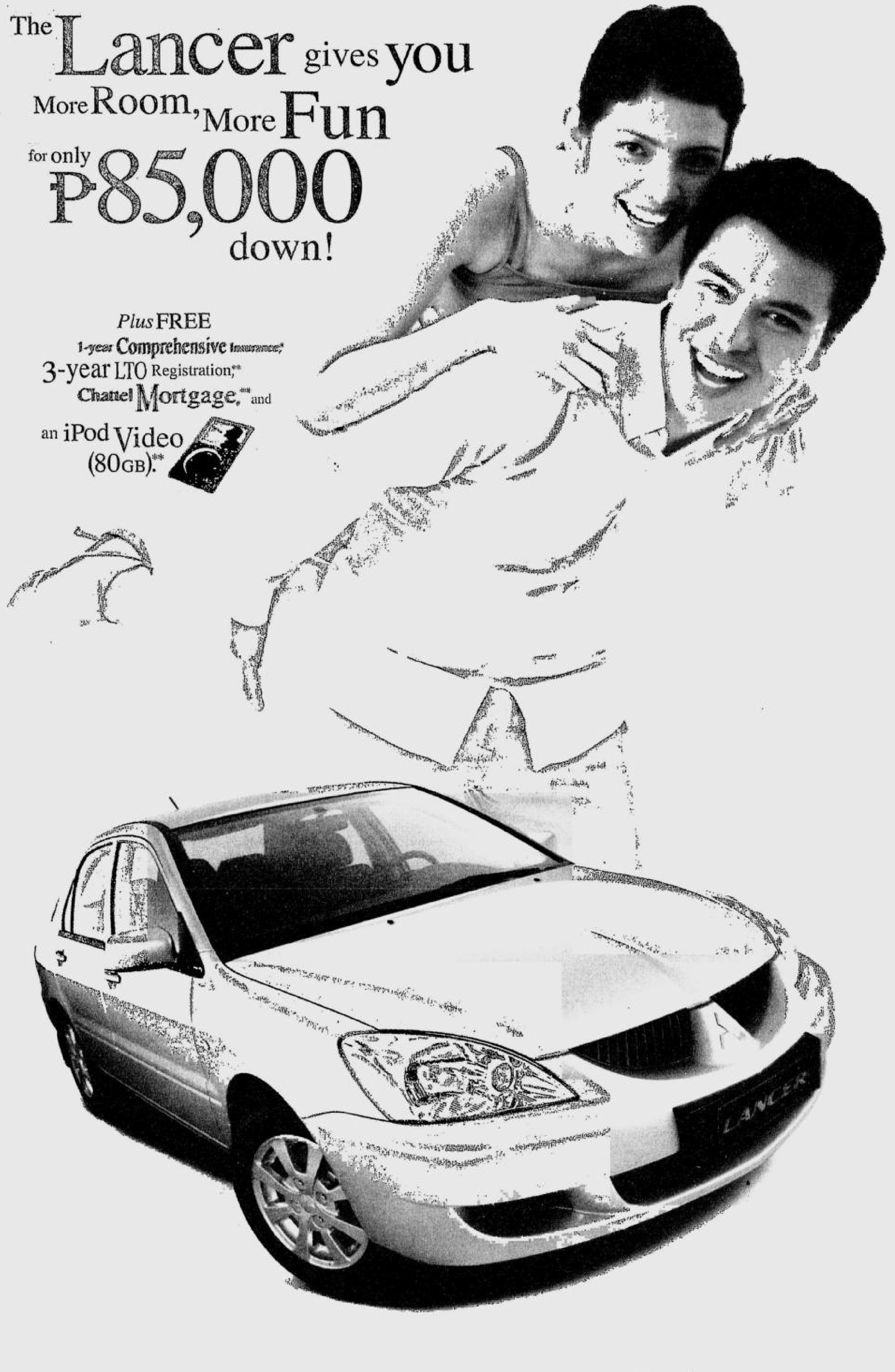
"At least in this particular case, I urge the Arroyo government to do a Marcós. If they don't, then we're worse off today than under the Marcos dictatorship," said Aquino in a statement.

Aquino recalled that his late father was interviewed by a panel of editors and publishers and through them was able to project his platform of representation.

The elder Aquino who led the opposition under the banner Lakas ng Bayan (Laban) lost in the elections that most people believed was rigged. The Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL) wiped out the opposition in Metro Manila by an incredible 21-0 result.

Trillanes, who's also a member of the opposition senatorial slate, is facing rebellion charges in connection with the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny.

He is currently detained at the Marine Brigade facility in Fort Bonifacio.



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Student activist slain in Camarines

By Ephraim Aguilar
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—A MEMBER AND former provincial spokesperson of the militant League of Filipino Students (LFS) in Camarines Norte was shot dead Thursday night by an unidentified gunman just four meters away from the gate of his school.

The Bicol chapter of the human rights group Karapatan identified the victim as Farly Alcantara II, 22, of Mercedes town in Camarines Norte. He was a graduating business administration student of the Camarines Norte State College (CNSC) in the capital town of Daet.

Alcantara was the first leftist student leader to be killed in the country this year and the fourth in Bicol since 2001, according to Vince Casilihan of Karapatan.

He was the president of the Junior Economic Society of the CNSC College of Business Administration, said Dr. Sonia Carbonel, director of the CNSC Office of Student Services.

Carbonel said Alcantara was on his way home on a motorcycle with his professor Willy Bermejo when he was shot five times in the head. Bermejo was unhurt.

Col. Henry Rañola, police director of Camarines Norte, said the murder weapon was a .45-cal pistol. Four empty shells and two deformed slugs were found at the crime scene.

Rañola quoted investigators as saying that the gunman was about 5 feet, 5 inches tall and wore navy blue shorts.

How it happened

Carbonel said Alcantara arrived at the school past 8 p.m. from the Ateneo de Naga University in Naga City, where he had attended a competition.

She was then in the guard house checking on the students entering the campus to attend a school event that night, as well as those going out.

This was her account, as narrated in a phone interview:

Alcantara happily informed Carbonel that he had won third place in the business plan competition.

At around 9:35 p.m., Bermejo came to the guard house and offered Alcantara a ride home. Like Bermejo, Alcantara lived in Mercedes, some 60 kilometers away from the CNSC.

Alcantara offered to drive Bermejo's motorcycle. Bermejo agreed, and took the back seat holding the student's traveling bag.

After a while, Carbonel heard a series of gunshots that sounded like the "Judas belt" firecracker.

"I heard around five gunshots. I was facing the quadrangle, so I did not see what was happening. When I turned, I saw Mr. Bermejo running toward my direction and saying that Farly had been shot and was dead," Carbonel said.

She said she went out of the gate to check on Alcantara, and then ran to the nearby police station to seek help.

Meters away

"How could the crime have happened when the police headquarters was just 300 to 500 meters away?" said Karapatan's Casilihan.

Carbonel said only the tricycle drivers outside the school gate could have witnessed the shooting.

But she quoted one driver as saying that he did not see the gunman because he hid at the back of his tricycle upon hearing the shots.

The driver also said the gunman fled before he could be seen, she added.

In a statement e-mailed to the INQUIRER, Emmanuel Gutierrez, regional coordinator of LFS-Bicol, condemned the killing which he described as "President Macapagal-Arroyo's post-Valentine gift to the Filipino youth."

"Justice has not yet been served in the three other killings of student leaders, and here comes a new one—a desperate move of the administration to harass and silence the youth who do not ask for anything but real education reforms," Gutierrez said.

On July 31 last year, a day after his birthday, Reymon Guran of Aquinas University in Legazpi was shot dead inside a bus in Sorsogon City. He was the spokesperson of LFS-Albay.

The other student leaders killed were Cris Hugo, LFS-Bicol regional coordinator (March 19, 2006), and Joel Asejo, Anakbayan member (Oct. 1, 2002). Both were from Bicol University in Legazpi.

GMA orders Melo report released

From page A1

to release it to appropriate bodies," he said.

But the media will not have access to the report containing the Melo Commission's findings on the unabated killings of journalists and leftist activists since Ms Arroyo took power in 2001.

The report was submitted to Ms Arroyo late last month by the commission chair, retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo. Its contents have yet to be made public.

Asked what took him so long to implement the President's directive, Gonzales said he had to make "some transmittals" to the offices of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

"But I was asked by the President to make the decision as early as Tuesday," he said.

No major discrepancies

Gonzales told the INQUIRER that the report had no "major discrepancies" from the earlier statement made by Melo linking the military, particularly retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, to some of the killings.

He reiterated the Palace's position that the report was "incomplete."

"It's a preliminary report only. That's why we said that we will release it when [it] is already complete," he said, adding that the Melo Commission was "expected to continue" with its investigation.

He said the commission had no "timeframe" to finish the probe and "come up with its conclusions."

Gonzales wondered why critics of the President had accused Malacañang of hiding the report: "I don't know why this issue came out."

Asked why Malacañang described the report as "inconclusive," he said: "It only covered 10 percent of what should have been covered."

Only one source

Ermita said on Thursday that the latest killings in Samar, Bicol and Misamis Oriental should be incorporated into the commission's final report.

He took militant groups to task for snubbing the invitation of the commission to testify at its hearings, and for supposedly bloating its list of victims.

Asked about the reason for the withholding of the report, Ermita said Malacañang did not want the public to think that the report was based on only one source—Palparan and other generals who served as resource persons.

It was Bunye who told reporters on Thursday that the Palace was temporarily withholding the report.

"The government intends to work closely with the UN to get at the root of the matter although we have held the first Melo report from distribution because it's still incomplete and, at this point, inconclusive," he said.

Bunye welcomed the statement of the families of slain activists that they would fully cooperate with Alston and his team.

EV ESPIRITU/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

PROBER IN BAGUIO: Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, visits the Commission on Human Rights in Baguio. He meets with officials behind closed doors.

"This will complete the picture that the Melo Commission could not understandably achieve in view of the refusal of the families to testify before the probe body," he said.

He added that with the inputs of the UN and "other well-meaning agencies, hopefully we can come up with a more comprehensive appreciation of the issue and undertake all means to resolve it permanently and close the book on it."

Gonzales said yesterday that he expected the issue of the extrajudicial killings to be resolved soon.

He said the independent inquiries by the EU and the UN team would "tell us how to proceed."

"Their recommendations are most welcome by the government," he said.

Oplan Bantay Laya

Bayan Muna, the militant party-list group that lost at least 127 of its leaders and members to extrajudicial killings, lauded the planned creation of special courts devoted entirely to such cases.

But Bayan Muna Representatives Satur Ocampo and Teodoro Casiño told the INQUIRER that the initiative of Chief Justice Reynato Puno was bound to fail without Ms Arroyo's unequivocal support.

They specifically want Ms Arroyo to "rescind" the so-called Oplan Bantay Laya, a military campaign purportedly targeting the Communist Party of the Philippines, its armed wing the New People's Army, and groups tagged as its fronts.

"What is more crucial at this point is for the President to issue an order to all state security forces not to engage in such killings, to relieve military commanders where the killings happen ... and overhaul the government's counterinsurgency program," Casiño said.

To make the special courts work, Ms Arroyo "must first end the policy of abetting, encouraging and sanctioning political killings as contained in Oplan Bantay Laya," according to Ocampo.

"This policy and counterinsurgency operation-plan have rendered useless all previous investigative bodies, and continue to make justice elusive for victims' families, and may sabotage the special courts formed by the Chief Justice," he said in a statement.

Of no use

After meeting on Thursday with the UN team led by Alston, Puno announced that he was forming special courts to concentrate on extrajudicial killings.

Karapatan has listed 832 alleged summary executions since 2001. Of the number, 127 of the victims belonged to Bayan Muna, according to its media coordinator Tonyo Cruz.

"Unfortunately, the executive branch does not share the commitment of Chief Justice Puno to end, investigate and prosecute such cases," Ocampo said.

He said the special courts would practically be of no use, and predicted that prosecutors and investigators—who are under the executive branch—would "doom all cases against the military and police under the present circumstances."

Palparan cases dropped

According to Ocampo, all cases against Palparan had been dropped by the Department of Justice.

"The prevailing policy of Ms Arroyo, as implemented by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Norberto Gonzales, will make it impossible for victims to successfully file cases before the special courts," he said. *With a report from Christian V. Esguerra*

Economic surge elates GMA

From page A1

tions can spoil the larger gain of the economy," she said.

Share prices at the stock market hit a 10-year high on Thursday, pushing the main index closer to its all-time high of 3,447.60—recorded on Feb. 3, 1997. Shares declined 1.36 percent yesterday as investors cashed in on gains during the previous two sessions.

Asia's strongest currency

The peso, on the other hand, gained a hefty 25 centavos to close at 48.25 against the dollar on Thursday, and then closed yesterday at a new six-year high of 48.10. *(See related story on B1.)*

The peso is Asia's strongest currency so far this year with a gain of 1.8 percent, spurred by strong inflows of remittances from overseas workers and a rally in the stock market.

Ms Arroyo spoke before the 27th annual meeting and the 2006 international science conference of the Philippine-American Academy of Science and Engineering held in Manila.

"Our eye is on the ball as we aim our volleys on better paying jobs, improved infrastructure, including technology, enhanced social services, the alleviation of poverty and hunger, fighting terror [and] nurturing the environment, all of which will benefit from technology," she said.

Aiming for the summit

"The Filipino people are shrugging off the past and looking forward to the fruits of steady growth, trade and investment."

Ms Arroyo also said: "We must all seize the moment, to reach the summit through our unity and hardwork, brandishing the Filipino team spirit that has gained renown worldwide. The Philippines is a team to beat when it comes to excellence, resiliency, and staying power in a competitive world."

Welcoming scientists from different parts of the world, the President said that in her administration's medium-term Philippine development plan, science and technology policies should be supportive of national development goals.

Lack of funds

"And this conference, dovetailing science and technology and economy, fits into that challenge," she said.

But she admitted there were specific challenges the country had to contend with, such as the lack of funds to bankroll research and development.

"The first order of the day for us was to put our economic house in order and find the funds to meet those challenges," she said. "Thanks to (Congress) we had our fiscal reforms, our peso strengthened, our interests went down and we saved P30 billion last year."

'Glowing reviews'

Ms Arroyo said savings and increased funds from revenues led to reforms. Thus, "the Philippines today basks in glowing reviews of our fiscal and economic reforms."

She told her audience that she had just come from a groundbreaking of a pharmaceutical company, Wyeth, in the Calabarzon area worth $80 million, "and they said that they did this expansion because of our economic reforms."

Ms Arroyo announced she would issue an executive order creating a presidential coordinating council on research and development, fund the construction of a science complex at the University of the Philippines and release P200 million for science and engineering scholarship programs. *With a report from Reuters*

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Villar vows to back Dagupan mayor if he runs against JDV

DAGUPAN CITY—SENATE PRESIDENT Manuel Villar yesterday said he would support the candidacy of Mayor Benjamin Lim of this city should the latter run against Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. for a seat in Congress representing Pangasinan's fourth district.

Lim, who belongs to the administration party, earlier said he would join the opposition should he finally decide to run against the Speaker.

Villar was welcomed in his visit to the city by Lim, fanning speculations that the mayor was cementing a decision to transfer to an opposition party, probably Villar's Nacionalista Party.

Also yesterday, former Philippine National Police chief Arturo Lomibao said his supporters had convinced him to consider contesting De Venecia for the fourth district seat.

Lomibao, the National Irrigation Administration chief, said he had originally applied to run as the Pangasinan gubernatorial candidate of Kampi, President Macapagal-Arroyo's party.

But he said a Kampi arbitration committee was taking too long to decide who between him and Pangasinan Rep. Amado Espino Jr. would be the party's official candidate for governor.

Villar also said there would be no junking of candidates in the opposition's senatorial ticket, where he and Sen. Francis Pangilinan were invited to run as guest candidates.

"It is not true," Villar said, as he disputed reports that he and Pangilinan might be junked if they failed to carry the rest of the ticket in their campaign.

He said the issue might have surfaced because of a little misunderstanding among members of the United Opposition.

"Maybe, there are members who may have said it. But I have talked with the leadership of the UNO and others who are with the campaign and no one brought it up," he said.

Some opposition leaders reportedly complained that had been required to campaign for Villar and Pangilinan, when the two were seen as not promoting the entire slate.

But Villar said he would campaign for the entire senatorial slate of the opposition because "it's my responsibility as a guest candidate of the party." *Gabriel Cardinoza, Vincent Cabrera and Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Gordon says Comelec 'fooling' public

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

SEN. RICHARD GORDON YESTERDAY SAID the Commission on Elections was "fooling" the public in saying that poll automation could no longer be done.

Gordon also questioned capacity of the technical advisory council of the Comelec which had thumbed down partial automation of the May elections.

He said the law stated that the council could just advise the Comelec which specific machines to use and not declare whether poll automation could be done.

The council had said the Comelec, the public and a designated automated election system provider would not be ready to implement the automation law soon.

But a computer systems provider offering its locally produced software for touch-screen voting for free yesterday said it had long been ready.

Mega Group of Computer Companies chief technical officer Joel Ong told the INQUIRER they had offered the software to Comelec as early as before the 2004 national election.

But the existing law before just provided for an optical mark reader, which meant the touch-screen voting was not allowed.

It is now allowed under the amended law, according to Ong.

Quarantine officials seize Japanese eggs

By Tarra Quismundo

QUARANTINE OFFICIALS AT THE MANILA International Airport yesterday intercepted a passenger who arrived with two boxes of fresh eggs in his baggage.

Airport officials confiscated a total of 160 fresh eggs from a Japanese passenger who arrived at 1:33 p.m. yesterday at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) on board Japanese Airlines flight 741.

"There are cases of bird flu in Japan, that's why all poultry products from Japan are banned," said Nilo Crystal, veterinary quarantine inspector at the arrival area of Naia Terminal 1.

Customs supervisor Antonio Veses found the cartons of eggs while checking the baggage of Yoshimi Kanno, who seemed to have "concealed" the banned items as he had placed them underneath his personal belongings.

"You would never see them unless you open the plastic bag and look underneath," Veses said.

He then referred the passenger to airport quarantine officials, who seized the boxes of eggs by virtue of the Department of Agriculture's Memorandum Order No. 02, which banned all poultry products from Japan starting Jan. 16.

The memo barred eggs, poultry meat and day-old chicks from entering the country to prevent the possible spread of the avian flu virus, which has affected livestock in Japan.

Quarantine officials said Kanno had no documents for the items and could not explain why he had brought eggs into the country as he could not speak English.

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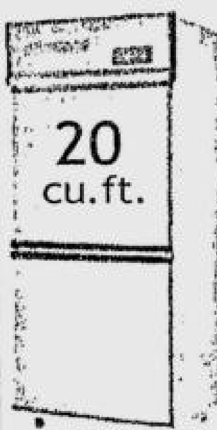
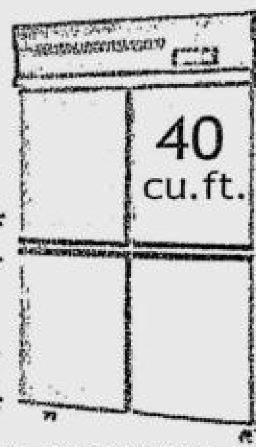

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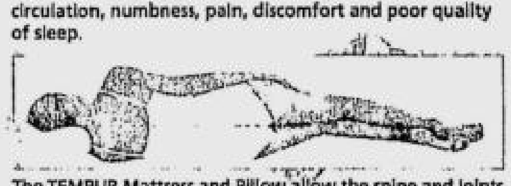

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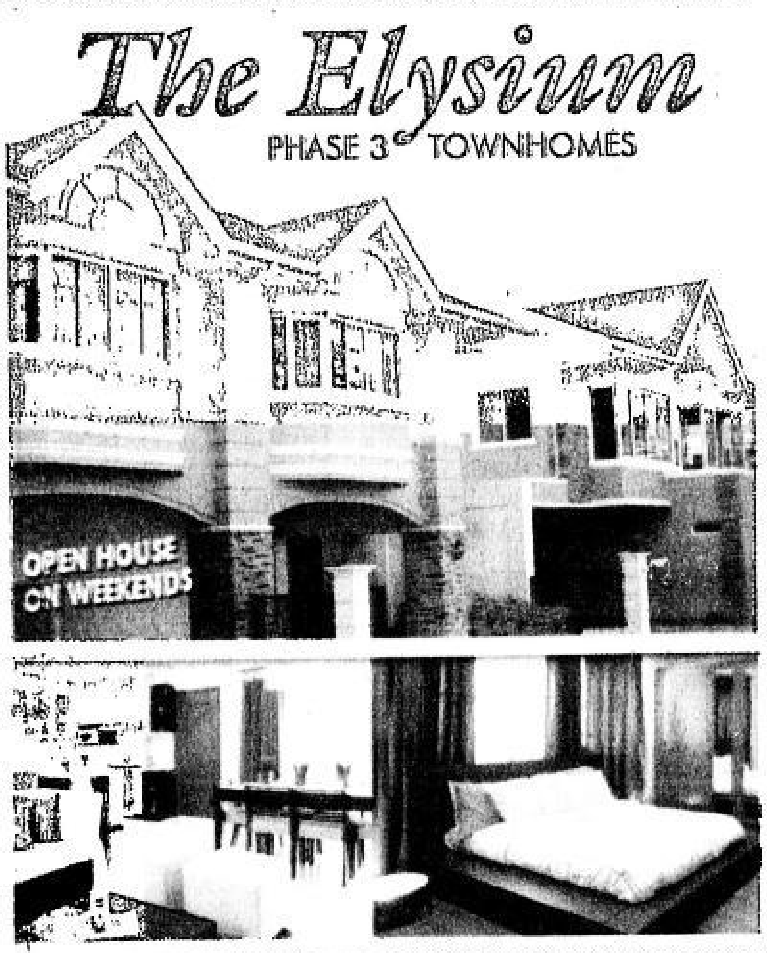

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Edong on romancing Loren: Ridiculous

From page A1

senator until she became majority leader.

"I was her mentor ... sort of," he said, in the same way that he said he also mentored President Macapagal-Arroyo when the latter was in the Senate.

He said he helped Ms Arroyo because her mother, Eva Macapagal, was his friend.

Angara said Legarda was a fast learner as far as parliamentary duties were concerned.

"That means that the teacher was good," he beamed.

Sought for comment, Legarda said she was not affected by the rumor because it was not true.

"I don't want to dignify that repeated recycled garbage," she said.

Courting her—vote

"Please talk to a family friend and confidant who is privy to all of these things," she said, referring to her friend and spokesperson Willie Fernandez.

Claiming to be privy to the circumstances that "led some people to weave false, malicious and unkind stories about Loren Legarda," Fernandez sought to put the issue to rest in a statement he sent to the INQUIRER.

He explained that in 2002, Angara wanted to form a new Senate majority and needed Loren, the then majority leader who held the swing vote, to join him.

ANGARA SHOOTS DOWN A RUMOR that refuses to go away. "It's not true, it's unfair." JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

"I witnessed how Angara persistently pursued Loren for that crucial Senate vote," Fernandez said.

Despite Angara's persistent efforts to win her vote—the post of Senate President Pro Tempore and term-sharing as Senate President were allegedly offered as sweeteners—Loren stuck it out with the camp of Senate President Franklin Drilon.

Text messages

Angara said he himself has been receiving text messages on the supposed romance from unidentified mobile phone users.

"But I'm not bothered by this," said Angara. He said his wife Gloria did not believe any of it.

He recalled that when he and his wife went to see a movie in Rockwell sometime ago, it was reported in the Senate media that he was with Legarda.

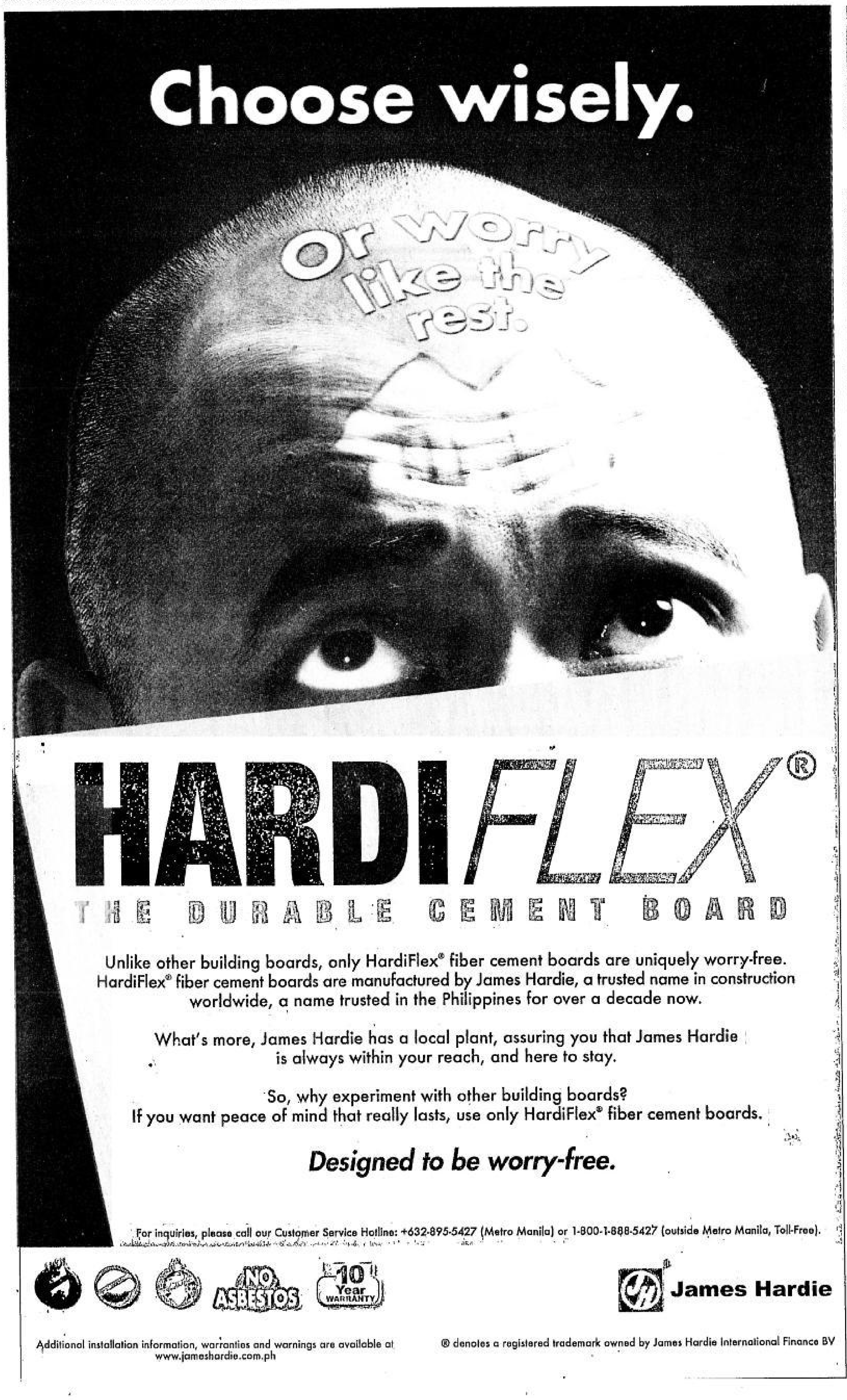
Angara said Legarda was apparently also at Rockwell at the same time but he did not even see her.

"This lie which is being peddled around through text messaging is pure canard. This is the same dirty propaganda which some quarters tried to use in 2004 against Loren but which failed. It is now being recycled to discredit her, especially since all three big pollsters have tagged her to top the senatorial election in May," said Fernandez.

Ping behind it

Even worse, there are also text messages now saying that he ran off with the campaign funds of the late Fernando Poe Jr., the opposition candidate for President, Angara said.

"You know, these are just being made up by by the camp of Ping Lacson," Angara said in Filipino, referring to Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who is also running in Legarda's ticket. Angara and Lacson have a long-running feud.



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CAREER MOVE: Best Actor at the Metro Manila Film Festival last December
business in many intriguing ways. He shows his certificate of candidacy flanke
the Team Unity, and Presidential Political Adviser Gabriel Claudio (right).

Cesar Montano joins Team

From page A1

take photos of the popular movie actor who was wearing a blue New York Knicks baseball cap and a blue-and-white striped shirt. Petilla was all but ignored.

No time to tell Sunshine

A staff of Montano said that the actor was having a photo shoot when he was called to Malacañang at around 1 p.m.

The actor stayed at the Palace until 5 p.m., giving him little time to inform his family so they could join him at the Comelec.

Not a few fans and media people were disappointed that Montano's wife, actress Sunshine Cruz, was not with him.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano, who is the spokesperson for Team Unity, said Montano had "expressed interest in running" and passed the team's criteria.

Plus factor

"Being an actor is just a plus factor for him. Our main consideration for the selection of candidates for Team Unity is their capability and credibility in advocating the platform of government of the ticket in a particular sector of our society," he said.

He said Montano fit the two requirements for a substitute candidate: That he be a member of the party and that he is someone capable and credible from the Visayas.

"Popularity was never a consideration. It's credibility and capability to advocate the platform of government of the administration. Being popular is just a plus for him," Durano told ANC.

Michael Defensor, a Team Unity senatorial candidate, said he welcomed the inclusion of Montano as it would provide diversity to the ticket.

"He is a respected actor and director, we have all been open to his inclusion in the team even at the time when his name was just being floated as those being considered," Defensor said in a phone interview.

Defensor said Montano's ent
give a "higher profile" to the te
cially among the masses.

Chosen over Edu

The decision to pick Montan
la's replacement was not that d
he was one of two show biz p
ties—the other was actor E
zano—being seriously conside
administration political strate
said.

Durano said that Petilla,
member of the ruling Lak
would have to be substituted b
party member.

Under Section 7 of the
Election Code only a person b
to and certified by the same
party may replace any candid
withdraws.

In a phone interview, Montan
was pursuing the program of th
pine College of Physicians (PCP
iate society of the Philippine M
sociation.

Montano said that his futur
bills would not be so different
PCP's H.E.R.O. program which
Help, Education, Reform and O

Of course, among his priorit
be writing laws for the bene
movie industry and movie actor

The PCP, an umbrella organ
internists, used the image of th
hero Jose Rizal on one of its pos
tano played Rizal in a 1998 mov

Movies take back seat

"Perhaps the President saw m
butions in the movie industry a
the honor I brought to the coun
we won international awards,"
said.

"Maybe she also saw that as
and director, I have a foundat
public servant in my own little
my heart is dedicated to the edu
the youth," he said.

He said that as a senator h
helping would find a bigger scop

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Zubiri gets 'Boom Tarat Tarat' ...

From page A1

become wildly popular among the *masa* and may even win a lucky candidate a seat in the Senate.

Composed by Lito Camo, "Boom Tarat Tarat" was given to senatorial candidate Miguel "Migz" Zubiri to be used as his campaign jingle—free of charge.

Camo told the INQUIRER on Wednesday that he did not charge Zubiri for the song because the candidate is a close friend.

"I met him during the last elections," Camo said in Filipino. The songwriter admitted that other candidates had asked him for the song, which was originally recorded by Willie Revillame under Star Records.

"They were all prominent candidates," he said, but refused to name names. "It would be unfair to them if I made their identities public."

Camo said he talked to Star Records, which owns the publishing rights to the song, to allow Zubiri to use the ditty.

"*Pinakiusap ko 'yon sa* Star (I prevailed on the label to allow Zubiri to use the song)," he said.

National anthem

"Boom Tarat Tarat" started as a Christmas song. Its daily exposure in Revillame's television game show, "Wowowee" turned the song into a national anthem, triggering a spin-off with lyrics without the holiday theme.

In the last presidential election, Camo's "Pito-Pito" was also adopted as a campaign jingle by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The song was also recorded by Revillame under Universal Records. Camo said the deal for the use of "Pito-Pito" was made by Ms Arroyo with the late Bella Tan, who was then president of Universal.

He said he was not involved in the negotiations, but admitted that he received a commission for the use of the song and a separate fee for singing the jingle.

Camo, however, refused to reveal how much he made from the deal.

Other novelty tunes

The songwriter is known for other novelty songs that became hits, like "Laban O Bawi," "Spaghetti Song," "Otso-Otso," among others.

The late Fernando Poe Jr., who ran against Ms Arroyo in the last presidential elections, used "Bonggahan," a song composed by Gary Perez, and made a hit in the '80s by rock singer Sampaguita.

Sampaguita also sang Poe's jingle. "He paid me for singing the jingle," she told the INQUIRER. "The money made me happy."

Candidates are also making a beeline for the services of popular singers to guest in their political rallies. But not all offers are lucrative.

Singing for peanuts

Pilita Corrales, a perennial choice of candidates during past elections, was offered a sack of *kalamansi* (lemons) and a sack of garlic for her appearance in an outreach program sponsored by a provincial mayoralty candidate. She was asked to sing two, maybe three songs to the crowd.

To get to the gig, Corrales said she would have to travel three hours by land and another hour by ferry boat.

Corrales said she did not accept the offer because she preferred a sack of peanuts.

Cesar Montano's new career is akin to show
d by Leyte Gov. Jericho Petilla, whom he replaced in

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Unity

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On criticisms against actors turning into politicians, Montano, an industrial engineering graduate of the Lyceum University, said in Filipino: "You do not need long arithmetic to return the money to taxpayers."

Not to compete but to help

Asked what his edge was over another actor senatorial aspirant, Richard Gomez, Montano said he did not join the election to compete but to help the country.

While he said he would not completely give up show business, it would have to take a back seat if he gets elected to the Senate.

Why Petilla backed out

Gabriel Claudio, presidential political adviser, said that "complications" arose in in Leyte following Petilla's decision to run for senator instead of seeking reelection.

"It was the decision of the family and the party that it's more important for him to run as governor," Claudio said.

Petilla's inclusion in the administration senatorial ticket is believed to be the "win-win" solution to avert a collision in the ruling party in Leyte after the Romualdez family joined the ruling coalition.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is said to have convinced Rep. Remedios Petilla, the governor's mother who is the representative of Leyte's first district and a member of the Lakas-CMD, not to run for reelection but to run instead for governor. In exchange, her son, the incumbent governor, was given a slot in the administration's senatorial ticket.

This paved the way for Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, a son of Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez and a recent convert to the President's Kampi party, to run unopposed as congressman of Leyte's first district.

However, Remedios Petilla decided to retire from politics, leaving the way open for her son Jericho to run for reelection as governor. *With a report from Bayani San Diego Jr.*

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OPINION

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Sore spot

EDITORIAL

THE PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO BE INFORMED ON "matters of public concern," which is enshrined in the Constitution, cannot be circumscribed by the government's need to project a positive image of itself. The Arroyo administration, however, thinks otherwise. Thus, it has refused to make public such important documents as the Mayuga Report on the military's involvement in the alleged 2004 election fraud; and the Melo Commission Report on the extrajudicial executions of hundreds of journalists and leftist activists. And we have a President who has grown increasingly suspicious of the media and their efforts to find answers to difficult—often embarrassing—questions about the way she has been running the government.

In the latest public display of presidential pique, President Macapagal-Arroyo refused to answer a question posed by an INQUIRER reporter and abruptly ended the interview, to the surprise of the three Cabinet members and an official of the International Monetary Fund who were in attendance.

The question thrown by Gil Cabacungan was this: "Isn't it a concern for you, Ma'am, that the billionaires during the time of Marcos are also the same billionaires now?" Barbed, no doubt, but perfectly relevant, especially at a time when all the President's men have been touting the administration's economic achievements.

Sensing perhaps that she might not be able to extricate herself without only making things worse, the President sought refuge in some broad ground rules set for the interview. "Those are political questions, Gil," she told the reporter. "Thank you. That's the end, thank you." After saying a few more words of thanks, she stood up and left the room in a huff.

We don't know where the former economics professors draws the line between economics and politics. But if economics deals with anything at all, it is the production and distribution of goods and services as well as of wealth and resources. How the nation's resources is shared is an integral part of the study of economics. The process becomes political only when government resources are distributed—or wasted—through the congressional pork barrel.

Ms Arroyo knew this, of course, and she showed it by coming back and telling the INQUIRER reporter: "We will not grow rich by pulling the rich down but by pulling the poor up. We should bring up everybody—spread the wealth that way."

But if anyone talked about taking the rich down in the interview, only Ms Arroyo seemed to have heard him. Who can be against spreading the wealth and bringing everybody up in terms of standard of living? But the question is, how or what has the government done to alleviate poverty amid rising plenty?

There's no debating the fact that the economy has recovered and its growth has been fast and sustained. The beast of a budget deficit that threatened to sink the economy only a few years back has been tamed. The peso has become stronger and the stock market has been touching near-record highs. (All of these have been noted and reported by the media, contrary to what the President seems to think.)

What is less certain is whether Filipinos, particularly the poor, have begun to partake of the fruits of such a happy turn of events. Many are saying no, with a bigger number of people actually saying they experienced hunger in the past three months, according to the latest Social Weather Stations survey. Some 3.7 million job-seekers could not find employment, according to the latest government estimates. Isn't it fair to ask what the President and her administration have done to put food on the table for the hungry millions and give employment to those who want to earn a living?

If the billionaires now are the same as during Marcos' time, it is because very few have been pushed up to that status, and not because anybody has pulled the rich down—least of all the media. And even as the ranks of the super-rich have not swelled, the number of the nation's poor has not shrunk. And the Arroyo administration apparently has no clear program to rectify this.

Glowing statistics cannot hide the millions of poor and hungry people. And throwing a tantrum cannot drive the problem away. Not even if you are the President.

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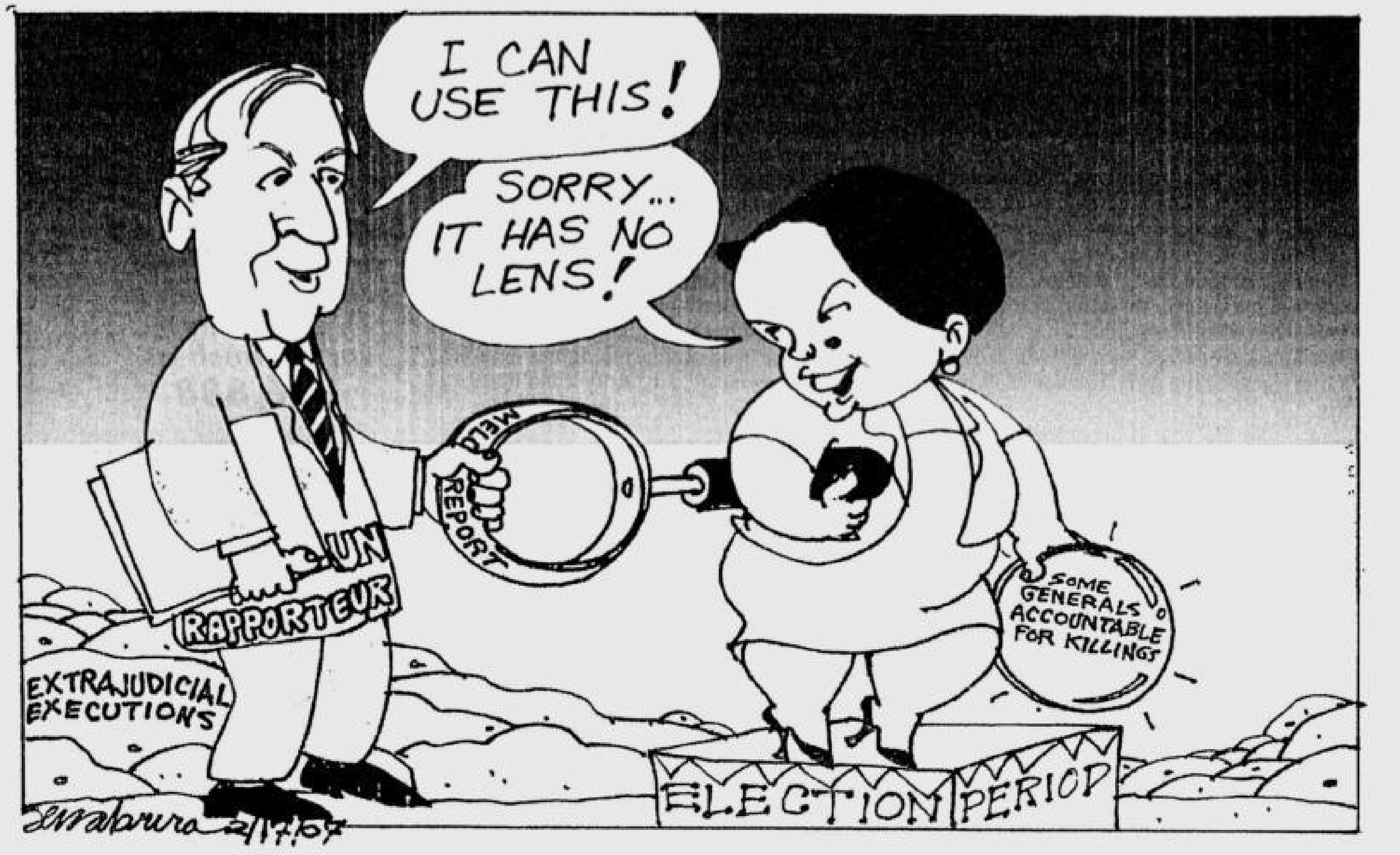

The companion of wisdom

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

LAST WEEK, THE RETIRED JUSTICES OF THE Supreme Court tendered a luncheon to congratulate their former colleague, the Honorable Reynato S. Puno, on his recent appointment as the new Chief Justice of the Philippines.

The RJSC is an exclusive club organized on March 3, 2000, to foster friendship among former colleagues on the high tribunal, assist and advise the incumbent Court whenever their services are requested or should be volunteered, and promote the interests, especially the good name, of the third major branch of the government. It has 33 current members headed by Justice Abraham F. Sarmiento as president, Justice Carolina Griño Aquino as vice president, and Justice Camilo D. Quiason as secretary-treasurer.

Additional members are chosen upon unanimous invitation of the body and are not automatically admitted by reason alone of their status. Those with unsavory reputations may be blackballed by any single member of the society and should have the good sense not to hope for their unquestioning approval. Membership in the Supreme Court during the Marcos dictatorship is not a blanket disqualification, in recognition of the value of personal amity and loyalty despite political enmities.

Our honoree is a jurist with impressive credentials. A graduate from the UP College of Law and the holder of various post-graduate degrees from American universities, Puno was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1993 after serving in several executive positions, particularly in the Office of the Solicitor General and as undersecretary in the Department of Justice. After Edsa I, he was reappointed to the reorganized Court of Appeals, from which he was later elevated to the high tribunal.

Prior to his appointment as Chief Justice, he was chair of the Third Division of the Supreme Court and also the Electoral Tribunals of the House of Representatives and later the Senate. He is an acknowledged expert in Constitutional Law and an uncompromising protector of human rights and freedom of expression. He was the *ponente* of several outstanding decisions, like Subayco v. Sandiganbayan, on the Escalante massacre in 1985, Secretary of Justice v. Lantion, on the Mark Jimenez extradition case, and Estrada v. Arroyo, which sustained the replacement of Joseph Estrada by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as his constitutional successor.

With the retirement of Chief Justice Hilario Davide in 2005, Puno as senior associate justice then expected to be appointed in his place. However, the seniority rule, which is customary but not obligatory, was not observed. Justice Artemio Panganiban was preferred, probably because he was to serve for only one year, anyway, after which Puno could take over until his own retirement in 2010. Additionally, Panganiban played an active role with Davide in installing Vice President Arroyo as president in 2001.

GMA must have regretted her decision when Panganiban led the majority justices in defeating the Malacañang-orchestrated initiative in the Supreme Court last year with, to add salt to the wound, the discarded Puno as the principal dissenter, besides having also earlier written the decision in the Estrada v. Arroyo case in her favor. President Arroyo was quick to make amends for her omission in 2005 and, the day after Panganiban's retirement last December, finally appointed Puno to his postponed position as Chief Justice.

Puno was right when despite his disappointment and the impulse to resign in resentful protest in 2005, he kept his cool and accepted his by-passing in good grace. His composure despite the temporary setback was rewarded when on Dec. 8, 2006, President Arroyo made good her promise to promote him as the next Chief Justice.

The luncheon given by the RJSC was attended by many of its members and their spouses eager to felicitate the new Chief Justice. Davide and Panganiban, his immediate predecessors, were there to join in wishing him success in his new office. (The only flaw in the gathering was a noisy singer who drowned the conversation of friends who had not seen each other for some time and would have appreciated a quieter opportunity to renew old ties.) Chief Justice Andres Narvasa could not attend because of an urgent engagement but he had earlier rendered his own salute to Puno with a lauriat attended by the members of the Narvasa Court.

The appointment of Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno was received by the nation and particularly the bench and the bar with quiet approval characteristic of his own reserved and low-profile nature. The retired justices of the Supreme Court were especially elated over their friend's forbearance over his disappointment last year that finally mellowed with his delayed but deserved appointment to the highest position in the Philippine judiciary.

Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno must have believed with Disraeli that "everything comes if a man will only wait" because, as St. Augustine once observed, "Patience is the companion of wisdom."

Zone of light vs twilight zone

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

IN A PAPER WHOSE TITLE I CANNOT FOR the moment recall, Raul Fabella (now dean of the UP School of Economics) distinguishes between a hard (strong) state and a soft (weak) state. A hard state is where there is order and rules are implemented strictly; a soft state is where there is a high level of disorder due to the marketization (buying and selling) of governance—where rules and their implementation can be bought and sold.

Everything is subject to negotiations in a soft state—from traffic violations to murder charges. Whereas in a hard state, when one breaks the law, one expects to be punished, no matter one's position—US President Bill Clinton getting impeached for lying and later getting disbarred is an excellent case in point.

Another way of distinguishing between a hard and soft state is by the relative magnitudes of the so-called (Fabella's terms, I think) "zone of law/light" and "twilight zone." In the former, the zone of light is much larger than the twilight zone. While in a soft state, the opposite is the case. The zone of light is where the letter of the law is enforced and where legitimate value-creating activities thrive; where there is transparency and accountability. The twilight zone, on the other hand, is where rules and enforcement are sold between enforcers and violators.

Given these definitions, it is clear that the Philippines is a soft state. The question is whether we are moving toward the zone of light, or whether we are sinking deeper into the twilight zone—that is, whether we are winning or losing in what Fabella calls "the battle for the Filipino soul."

A little over six years ago (Dec. 23, 2000), I wrote in this column that under the Estrada watch, the Philippines as a soft state was getting softer, with Estrada himself taking a lead role in achieving this state of affairs. Moreover, in the expanding twilight zone, he had shown himself to be on both sides of the transaction: enforcer as well as violator, buyer as well as seller. I wrote that his behavior showed a pattern of putting his personal interests, and those of friends and associates, above those of the country, a pattern brought out during his impeachment trial.

Less than a year later (Nov. 10, 2001), I wrote, again in this column, that the forces fighting for a larger zone of light seemed to be gaining some headway—as shown by the Supreme Court's moves to clean up regional and appellate courts, by the increased interception of smuggled goods, by the pursuit of cases against Joseph Estrada, by the efforts to stop drug money from converting the country to a narco-state, by the increased levels of whistle-blowing (such as the efforts of lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr.).

But what is the state of play now? Are the twilight zone forces winning against the zone of light forces in the battle for the Filipino soul?

Things don't look so good for the good guys.

Remember the midnight removal of the American soldier from the Makati City Jail? No matter what position one takes on his guilt or innocence, the hard fact is that the move was in total disregard—even defiance of—the law and the courts. But much worse, it was the executive department which was behind that move. That has to be considered a major blow against the zone of light. And this kind of action, where the executive rides roughshod over everyone else, has not happened since the days of the dictatorship—until then.

Or how about the refusal of the government to make the Melo Commission Report (on extrajudicial killings), or for that matter, also the Mayuga Report (on the involvement of some military generals in the elections) public? This policy against transparency has to be indicative of the government's desire to be less than truthful to the Filipino people, whom it is supposed to serve—presumably on the theory that "what they (the Filipino people) don't know won't hurt us (erring government officials)." Remember Kuratong Baleleng? That was *Extrajudicial Killing*, in capital letters. And while the police claimed it was a "shoot-out," the Senate Committee on Justice, headed by Raul Roco, concluded it was a "rubout" and recommended that Panfilo Lacson et al. be charged with murder. As we all know, the case against Lacson was dismissed—while he was a sitting senator—and he is now seeking a second term.

While the Kuratong Baleleng case involved 11 murders, there are now reports of hundreds of extrajudicial killings (from 150 to 700 and even more, the statistics are not clear), allegedly involving mainly the military (as killers). The lesson here, alas, seems to be that if you want to get away with murder, join the police or the military.

But it is not only the police or the military, our so-called protectors, that have successfully gotten away with murder. It seems we have to include certain landowners—as the paid ads complaining about agrarian violence and killing of farmers indicate. It is an indication of the (growing) strength of the twilight zone in the Philippines that 20 years after the Agrarian Reform Law was passed, there are still thousands of farmer beneficiaries who have not been installed in their lands. And no landowner has been jailed for breaking the law.

Fabella calls these phenomena "Leadership As Exemption—the higher up you go, the more exempt you are from the rules."

Those fighting to increase the zone of light have their work cut out for them.

One-sided picture

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

IT'S EASY TO UNDERSTAND THE GOVERNMENT's refusal to make public the report of the Melo Commission. It's not a complete report. The investigative body has heard only the testimony of the military personnel implicated in some of the killings, and of some agrarian reform beneficiaries related to some victims. Most of the relatives of leftist victims refused to appear before it, apparently on strict orders from the Left-wing umbrella group, Karapatan. From statements of retired Justice Jose Melo, the commission's chair, it's clear that the picture it has at the moment is very one-sided and does not represent the whole truth. Thus, government fears that if the partial report is released, some media and leftist groups might twist its contents at the expense of the military.

* * *

Interestingly, when the commission started its work, leftist organizations declared they would boycott its hearings, saying the commission's findings won't be credible anyway. Now that there is a partial report, they're angry that it's not being released.

The commission should be allowed to finish its work and get to the bottom of it all, regardless of who's implicated, but this looks impossible given the refusal of the families of slain Left-wing personalities to testify.

Now that officials from the European Commission are here to find out what's happening, these families are being ordered by Karapatan to talk only to the visiting dignitaries. Apparently the leftists' agenda is to maximize their noise abroad and paint the administration in a negative light. They don't seem too eager to get to the truth.

* * *

It's unbelievable how politics has consumed this country. Manny Pacquiao has just been honored—quite expectedly—by US boxing writers as "Fighter of the Year," but it must come as a shock to them to read that he plans to cast that honor aside and fight for a House seat. The problem is that he'll be facing two big fights in the next three months: against the Mexican champ and Rep. Darlene Antonino-Custodio. The tragedy is that he could very well lose both as he'll be dividing his time between them. Manny must realize that he's breaking the hearts of millions of adoring *kababayan* this way. Don't go into politics, Manny, you are our boxing champ.

* * *

Politics will be hottest at the local level, and reports say the two biggest coalitions supporting GMA—Lakas and Kampi—have been busy raiding each other's camp for recruits. In many places, these two parties will be squaring off, if arbitration doesn't work. About 65 members of the House are ineligible to run after serving three terms, and their seats will be up for grabs, not to mention thousands of local posts. At the center of the arbitration efforts of the GMA coalition is Mindoro Occidental Rep. Amelita "Girlie" Villarosa, Kampi's regional head for Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan (Mimaropa); who has been assigned by the party president, Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte, to arbitrate for their party. President Macapagal-Arroyo has also relied heavily on Villarosa's "expertise' in ironing out political wrinkles.

* * *

Villarosa doesn't have to go far, for right in Oriental Mindoro, there's a lot of squabble between the Liberals of the Atienza and Drilon wings on the congressional and local levels. In Cebu, free zones are being declared when there's no "equity of the incumbent" involved. The Garcia dynasty is flexing its muscle after deserting Lakas and joining Kampi. Former Gov. Pablo Garcia, father of reelectionist Gov. Gwen Garcia, plans to stage a comeback by running in the district to be vacated by Rep. Simeon Kintanar, while Pablo Jr. is seeking the seat being vacated by Rep. Antonio Yapha. Naturally feathers are being ruffled among GMA allies, *pero maaayos din ang gusot*, says Villarosa.

* * *

She's no stranger to this kind of work, for in the House her cool smiling disposition and amiable ways have worked to win votes for a measure, or against impeachment, etc. She enjoys the reputation of being the only Kampi leader who can coax Speaker Jose de Venecia to agree to a political arrangement. I caught her at the 58th birthday celebration of Gina de Venecia at the Don Bosco School recently, where the Assumption Convent classes of 1966 and 1970, under Gina's presidency, broke ground for a day-care center. She was rushing to an arbitration session in a Makati hotel, but managed to smile at me. Another job to be done.

* * *

Now for some bright and happy news: Two champion Ballroom and Swing dancers of Filipino parentage, who are also choreographers, dance teachers and judges in the United States, will be in town from Feb. 21 to 28. They will perform numbers in the "Red Ball" of the Philippine Red Cross, Muntinlupa Branch, on Feb. 24. They're relatively unknown here, but Arjay Evangelista and his girlfriend and dance partner, Melissa Rutz, have made enormous waves in dance circuits in the United States, highlighting once more what the world already knows: Filipinos are enormously artistic and talented.

Arjay and Melissa have scored successes in grand ballroom competitions in Reno, Nevada and Burlingame, California, and in the US Open Swing Dance Championships in Anaheim, California, the premier swing event in the world. This has netted them professional and contractual dance commitments all over the United States and other continents. They're also much in demand as teachers and judges, being only one of four top dance couples contracted to give a workshop in swing at the US Open.

I'm personally heartened by the artistic success of this young couple, as Arjay, who's also an accomplished violinist, is the son of a friend from way back, Rhona Evangelista-Centeno, who moved to California decades back with her husband, Armand Centeno Sr. and family. Congratulations, Rhona.

Going beyond the surface

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ON THE SURFACE, THE BEACH IN BARANGAY Tando, in the town of Nueva Valencia in Guimaras, appears pristine and unspoiled. The white sand beach cuts a perfect crescent along the water's edge, driftwood lie in bunches beneath the swaying coconut trees, and mangrove seedlings jut out from the shallow water.

And yet, as any visitor soon discovers, this perfect picture is indeed all on the surface. One has only to dig with one's toes to unearth the black oily sludge that lies beneath the sand, said to have been trucked in late last year for the President's fact-finding visit. Perhaps the sand helped, for the President went away reassured that things were back to "normal" for the folks of Guimaras.

Indeed, all things seem to indicate that the crisis caused by the sinking of an oil tanker in the waters off Guimaras is over. Much of the cleanup has been completed, there is no longer any need for the residents of the 24 affected communities to don gas masks and other protective gear, and Petron, which had chartered the tanker, has begun distributing thousands of pesos in economic compensation from an international insurance fund.

But even that is all on the surface. Fr. Filomeno Asan of the Philippine Independent Church in Nueva Valencia acknowledged that "for some in Barangay Tando, the oil spill could even be said to be a blessing." A private NGO gave each family one sack of rice, the first time many of the residents in this fishing-dependent barrio had ever seen an entire sack of rice. 'Just a few days ago," confided Father Asan, "I even married a couple who met while working on the beach cleanup."

But, said the plain-spoken priest, "the wounds remain, buried deep beneath the surface." No matter how well-meaning, relief and rehabilitation projects could not fully mitigate the trauma the people underwent. "Only through the restoration of their livelihood will the people get back their sense of dignity and security that the oil spill shattered," Father Asan remarked.

* * *

AND that is why we were there that warm Valentine's Day morning. The people had gathered at the plaza for the launching of a project called "Measures to Mitigate the Impact of the Oil Spill on Fisherfolk off the Coast of Guimaras," with funding support from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, a funding facility administered by the Canadian Embassy.

(I was there as a member of the Philippine Advisory Council, with Dr. Jimmy Galvez Tan, lawyer Sedfrey Candelaria of the Ateneo Center for Human Rights, Canadian Embassy political counselor Theressa de Haan and Myrna Jarillas of Cida as the other members.)

The project is managed by CRREED, which stands for Center for Relief, Rehabilitation, Education and Economic Development, based in Iloilo, and was conceived after consultations with the residents conducted by CRREED leaders, as well as by Toto Divino, Canada Fund program coordinator.

The townsfolk, Divino recounted, were extremely reluctant "to be turned into instant farmers after spending their whole lives fishing." They wanted to go back to fishing as soon as they could, but the problem was that, despite assurances from government agencies that fish in the waters off Guimaras were safe to eat, consumers refused to buy the catch once they found out where the fish came from.

The solution was to build deep-sea fishing boats that would allow the fishers to ply their livelihood beyond the oil-spill area. Four boats would be built, each to be manned in turns by residents in four clusters, who would divide the income from each catch as well as the expenses for gasoline and the share of a captain and crew.

* * *

ASIDE FROM the deep-sea boats, the project also includes the dispersal of goats to families in the four residential clusters who would breed and sell the animals for additional income, and the replanting of about three hectares of mangroves, to replace the forests that had been destroyed by the oil spill.

At the formal turnover of the project, Mayor Diosdado Gonzaga noted how "there are more visitors here than barrio folk" but took it to mean that "many people are concerned about the conditions in Guimaras." (Aside from representatives of Canada Fund, joining our group were officers of partner NGOs with projects also supported by the Fund.)

Perhaps by way of contrast, he said he had written to the President last week asking for her intervention because "seven months have passed (since the disaster) and no rehabilitation assistance has come our way from any national agency."

Expressing lingering concerns about the long-term effects of the oil spill (what with the remaining oil in the holds of the tanker, scheduled to be siphoned off on March 8), he said Nueva Valencia was the "most oiled" municipality in the island-province.

Provincial Board member Alan Chavez represented Gov. Rahman Nava at the launch.

* * *

DIVINO, who gave a briefing on the project, reminded everyone present that the success of the project lay entirely in the hands of the people themselves. "You are the ones affected by the disaster, and you will be the ones responsible for getting back on your feet and resuming your once-productive lives," he added.

It may be worth mentioning here that the four cluster leaders in Barangay Tando, who will be responsible for managing the project, are all women: Bernardina Alonde of Sitio Sambulana, Nonita Elejan of Sitio Iraya, and Phoebe Sababo and Fair Lady Elejan in the two sitios of the barangay proper. The barangay chair is also a woman, Olivia Evangelista, who, when we met her, was just recovering from a stroke that felled her as a result of all the stress of coping with the aftermath of this disaster.

Unity is not enough

WORLD VIEW

Daoud Kuttab

THE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE LEADers of the two major Palestinian groups, Hamas and Fatah, that has just been negotiated in Saudi Arabia is being hailed as a major political breakthrough. But the national unity government created as a result of this agreement faces many daunting challenges. The agreement needs to be followed by an effort to end the economic and administrative siege of Palestine, as well as by serious peace talks with Israel aimed at ending the 39-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At home, the new government needs to pay its civil servants, restore law and order, and end the chaos that has become the norm in the Palestinian territories.

The internal fighting in Palestine began in part as a result of the political impasse created after Israel and the international community imposed an economic embargo on the Palestinian Authority. This economic siege, zealously enforced even by Arab and Islamic banks, followed the new Hamas-led government's refusal to accept the demand by the "quartet"—the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia—that it recognize Israel, accept all previous agreements with Israel and renounce terrorism.

Palestinians complained that the international community acted unjustly, simply because they were unhappy with the result of a free and fair election in the Palestinian territories, which Hamas won overwhelmingly. The government created after the January 2006 elections has been unable to pay civil servants because of the international banking blockade and the refusal of Israel to transfer millions of tax dollars collected on behalf of the Palestinian people.

The government, headed by Hamas' Ismael Haniyeh, was confronted with a serious challenge in September, when civil servants, after months without pay, went on strike, demanding to be paid. The differences between the Fatah-led presidency of Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas' Islamist government spilled into the streets. Threats by Abbas to hold elections to resolve the deadlock seemed to add oil to the fire.

With unemployment rising, income dropping to record low levels, and internal tensions escalating, fighting between supporters of Hamas and Fatah began. Attempts to reconcile the parties began in Gaza, before moving to Cairo, Damascus, and finally Mecca under the supervision of Saudi King Abdullah, whose country has been a financial backer of the Palestinians for decades.

One of the first challenges for the new government will be to convince the international community that it respects previous Palestinian agreements, which include the mutual recognition agreed on by the PLO and Israel, as well as the Oslo Accords. By announcing the acceptance of previous agreements and supporting the Arab peace initiative, the new government should be able to bring economic normalcy to the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority.

Money, however, is not the only need. The ceasefire understanding between Palestinian factions and Israel will need to be honored through the commitment of both sides and a parallel political process. The international community, especially the United States, is giving verbal support to launching serious Palestinian-Israeli talks, and the Mecca Agreement paves the way for Abbas to negotiate an end to the occupation. This will test the resolve of Israel and the international community to achieve tangible progress on re-starting negotiations.

But the newly established national unity government faces yet another daunting challenge. If the resumption of political violence and property destruction are to be avoided, a new internal security policy will be needed. The numerous militias, groups, gangs and individuals who own and use weapons must be controlled. The new unity government must insist on the creation of a single, united armed force.

In order to end lawlessness, the Palestinian security leadership will need to lift the protection given to armed individuals who have been using their weapons with impunity to injure, kill and destroy property. Indeed, law and order must be the top priority of the unity government, owing to the need to restore the Palestinian public's confidence in Palestinian leaders from all factions.

The past year has been one of the most difficult years in modern Palestinian history. For years, the world envied the Palestinian people's strong social fiber, as they held together despite the occupation. With a strong sense of national identity, Palestinians boasted that they had a clear unifying purpose: ending the Israeli occupation and establishing an independent and democratic state.

But the recent months of infighting have left a deep wound among Palestinians. If that wound is to heal, much effort must be exerted to restore a functioning economy, strengthen internal security and improve Palestinians' relations with their neighbors and the international community.

Project Syndicate

Daoud Kuttab is the director of the Institute of Modern Media at Al Quds University in Ramallah.

What's going on here?

YOUNG BLOOD

Hannah Lyn C. Creencia

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

FOR 17 YEARS, I HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO KEEP MYSELF pure and holy in the eyes of God. For 17 years, I have remained unstained in my world and in my circle of friends. But all those years, I'm afraid, I have been shielded from the realities of the world we live in.

Pressure questions ("If you love me, you'll do it with me"). Stolen kisses. Hands exploring places they shouldn't be. What's going on here? This isn't the world I used to live in. This is no longer the world that valued purity, where girls saved their precious gifts for the guys they will spend the rest of their lives with.

I was taken aback when a friend asked me, "Does kissing have to involve love?" What kind of question was that? I couldn't understand what he meant. What was he getting at?

Kissing is an expression of love. Kissing without love would mean nothing. A kiss should be given to the one person who will spend forever with you.

But what I see is different. Couples give each other everything. They let go of their principles and their pride. Everywhere, I see chastity being sacrificed for fleeting pleasures. Conversations are spiked by tales about romantic escapades.

Is there no escape from this degrading trend? How come nobody ever told me that all this was part of a package that came with love?

It pains me to see naive lovers turning into not-so-innocent people. It pains me to see girls give in to temptation, without thinking of the consequences. And it kills me to have to put up with such practices.

Just because two people are "in love," it doesn't mean they can do whatever they want to each other. They don't belong to each other—not unless they decide to get married right there and then. Wouldn't it be a most special gift to give oneself only to the one she truly loves?

I guess it's no longer easy to just walk away now. The world often tells us this is what everyone is doing, so just give in.

But there must be someone out there who still loves with a Christ-like love. A love that respects. A love that protects. A love that is patient and kind and unconditional.

Or is it time for me to wake up?

Hannah Lyn C. Creencia, 17, is a second year AB Mass Communication student at Silliman University.

Survivor

Brombexine

All of my life
Where have you been?
I wonder if I will ever see you again.
—Lenny Kravitz

THIS IS A STORY THAT BEGINS WITH AN ENDING. IF LOVE means two people getting together, then this is love that never was and never will be. A false start can never ever lead to a fairy tale ending. Tears, pain, hurt—that's all you get, plus a hard kick in the end.

Aril was almost my first everything. Almost, because admittedly he was not my first love and first hurt. That distinction belongs to my best friend's boyfriend (but that's another story altogether).

They say that you will have one greatest love in your lifetime. If that's true, it would probably be Aril for me.

Why? Well, what else would you call accepting a guy as your boyfriend although he has two kids with a woman he does not consider his girlfriend, then breaking up with him, only to go back to him after he gets married to another woman? To some that may look like sheer stupidity, but I'm a reborn positivist and I consider it an act of bravery.

Martyrdom and masochism make up a fatal combination, and I have both tendencies. When heaven was pouring such attributes, I must have been suffering a big hangover and I just accepted them without thinking and understanding what they entailed. When I chose sainthood, alcohol probably drowned my senses and so my halo dropped down to my waist. But it did not drop far enough to serve as a chastity belt.

As a result, I stayed in a relationship (oh yes, I treated it as one even if my partner never did) for more than three years—three years and four months, to be exact.

However, like a mechanical toy when wound too tight, a relationship breaks. You can try to put it together and you can even fix it, but it is no longer quite the same anymore. It is broken, even though the cracks may not show.

Too much is always not too good. When abuse creeps in, even if it is just verbal and not physical, the relationship is shattered. And its effects endure longer, sometimes forever.

Are you willing to face a firing squad? Then be ready to hear the words, "I'm sorry, I cannot offer you anything. I have a kid. I have a wife!" (You should then ask if he didn't know that before he ruined my once peaceful life.)

But then again, I'm an optimist remember? So I set him free, of course without him knowing it. I just took off, leaving no explanations whatsoever. I changed my number and went to another place.

It's been nine months since then, but the feelings have never diminished, not one tiny bit. But the change of environment has allowed me to look at the affair with greater clarity. There are still a lot of questions left unanswered, but this time I know I have to do the searching alone. It is my own self that I need to find.

I'm still a martyr. I have learned the meaning of sacrifice. As R.P. Evans once put it, "Loving something is not desiring it, but desiring the happiness of the thing you love." In plain language, just let go.

Though I am still struggling, I believe this is the right thing to do. Despite all the mistakes and the wrong decisions I've made, one thing is certain: I will overcome. So what if my heart has been broken? So what if I have to keep all these things to myself because not one soul knows about my illicit affair with Aril (well, a few friends have an idea of what's going on but they don't know him)? So what if I cry every night and I have to tell anyone who notes my eye bags that I have overslept? So what if I feel insecure at times? I know and I am sure that I will survive!

If circumstances dictate that our paths should cross again, I wish that Aril will meet the real me and then he can do nothing but look and regret everything that happened in the past.

All of my life, I have been looking for the real me. Now when I look at the mirror, I think I have found her: one tough gal, wearing a big grin and winking, with her halo back in its proper place.

Brombexine, 27, has finished two courses but is still looking for her first job.

How workers can overpower 'trapos'

THE STARTLING NEWS THAT 23 MILLION Filipinos do not have access to toilets and clean water is not really surprising given the starvation wages of workers and widespread unemployment. Workers do not receive a living wage and, therefore, their standard of living is subhuman.

The fight for a legislated across-the-board wage hike becomes imperative more than ever. That the House of Representatives has frozen the wage hike bill because of Rep. Crispin "Boying" Remulla's treacherous motion for reconsideration is bad news for the workers. Still, the good news is that the Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) as the political party of the working class, pledges to continue the fight for labor's urgent demands. Aside from the legislated wage increase, in the platform of PM is the mechanism for living wage, tax exemption for workers earning below the cost of living, and amendments to the Labor Code to ensure protection against the onslaught of globalization.

The workers may have been outmaneuvered by the capitalists and Malacañang in this battle, but the war for the wage increase is not yet lost. The struggle for economic relief for the workers will go on to the next level and on to the next Congress. The workers must draw lessons from the fight for the P125-wage increase. The capitalists will go all the way in opposing the legislated wage hike and draw on its bag of dirty tricks to derail it. Only a powerful working class movement and mobilization can defeat such determined capitalist resistance.

The workers should participate in the coming elections with the aim of putting in Congress as many of their representatives as possible, but without any illusions of tilting the balance of power in the parliament of the *trapos*. The workers must use their seats in Congress to develop a formidable movement of workers—in the factories and in the offices, in the plantations of the countryside and in the communities of the urban poor. Using this strength in the parliament of the streets, the workers can shift the balance of forces inside the parliament of the *trapos* and can overpower the maneuvers of the capitalists. On that firm basis, the workers must advance a stronger campaign for a legislated wage hike and other pro-labor reforms.

—GERRY RIVERA,
vice chair,
Partido ng Manggagawa,
manggagawa@gmail.com

Air filtration to minimize pollution

THE INQUIRER'S FEB. 8 EDITORIAL CARtoon called attention to a challenge facing not just the government but all inhabitants of planet Earth as well. It showed melting polar ice caps, stressing the point that we have "enough" of global warming and should stop pollution now. It scares me to imagine how the earth will look like once the calamities associated with global warming strike.

In the INQUIRER's Feb. 6 issue, an article, titled "Help save earth, go on low-carbon diet," listed down 11 tips to help us do our share to at least minimize global warming.

Yes, the Clean Air Act was enacted and became a law. But, have there been concrete steps taken to stop air pollution? The Land Transportation Office, together with the MMDA, apprehends smoke-belchers. But theirs has never been a sustained effort.

I would like to suggest a practical approach: "air filtration." Why don't we use the diesel-fed engines (jeepneys, FX taxis, cargo trucks, etc.), the major contributors to air pollution, to remove particulates in the air?

For example, we can attach to these moving vehicles a simple accessory with filters that can suck in polluted air, hence cleansing it of particulates. As for the local government units, they can construct air filtering units in areas where air pollution is most pronounced. Likewise, factory emissions can be checked by installing filtering devices near the source.

—HERMES B. BITE,
3545-C Mag. Torres, Sta. Mesa, Manila

Solving 'terrorism' solely with firepower will not help

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE LETTER OF Edgar Palma who, because of our call for an investigation into the involvement of US troops in combat in Sulu, is accusing us of "championing terrorists." (INQUIRER, 1/27/07)

Palma mouths the official line that US troops in the country are only training Filipino soldiers and do not engage the enemies in gunfight. Our report—which Palma has obviously not read—includes both written and eyewitness accounts (a number of them given by US troops) casting doubt on this official line. In fact, US troops themselves have described their mission in Sulu as "unconventional warfare"—not just training. Witnesses have attested to seeing them with Filipino soldiers in military offensives. Contrary to Palma's claim that US troops have not engaged in gunfight, we have documented at least one known case in which US troops actually pulled the trigger at their enemies, as reported by the Los Angeles Times. Given that it's the word of the US and Philippine governments against the word of US troops and witnesses, we call for an independent investigation into the issue.

Who's afraid of finding out the truth? If the US troops have not really been involved in combat, then a truly independent and objective investigation will confirm it. Accusing those who raise questions of "championing terrorists" or of being "enemies of the state" is clearly meant to silence all discussions on this important issue.

Whether the US troops in Sulu are really helping end "terrorism" is another question altogether. It is indeed high time we debate it. Even the US Department of Defense, in a 1997 study, recognized that "Historical data show a strong correlation between US involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States." In Iraq, even the Central Intelligence Agency has noted that it was the US invasion of that country that has fueled what the US describes as "terrorism" there.

In Sulu, US military intervention is seen by many locals as stifling their demand for justice and self-determination, even as the root causes of their grievances are being ignored. There have been numerous human rights violations, allegedly perpetrated by the military, that remain unsolved. Reducing all these issues to a question of "terrorism" that can be solved with firepower will arguably not help achieve lasting peace in the region and beyond. Leaders of the Abu Sayyaf may have been killed, but for as long as the realities in that part of the country leave many with few other options, other people will take their place.

In any case, before we can proceed with this debate on whether US troops are contributing to defeating "terrorism" in the country, the US and Philippine governments must first own up to what the "visitors" are really doing here.

—HERBERT DOCENA,
Focus on the Global South,
19 Maginhawa St., UP Village, QC

Clear and present danger to civil liberties

DIRECTOR RICARDO R. BLANCAFLOR TRIED to allay public doubts and fears about the antiterrorism bill recently approved by the congressional bicameral committee. (INQUIRER, 2/5/07) The track record, however, of the Arroyo administration on issues of human rights invites so much misgivings.

Firstly, the administration has been engaged in juridical brinkmanship. Only a vigilant Supreme Court serves as a counterpoise in favor of civil liberties—seen in its rulings on EO 464, PP 1017, Cha-cha initiative and PCGG immunity. Political adventurism was blatantly exhibited in the Con-Ass (constituent assembly) caper.

Secondly, the pronouncements by the alter egos of President Macapagal-Arroyo have sent a chill down the spine of the citizenry. For instance, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales just issued a pre-election warning prejudicial to party-list, leftist and militant organizations whose members have been steadily decimated mainly by the military, as reported by the Melo Commission. On the other hand, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, in a moment of pique, stated that, against the general sentiment of the people, the present administration was even prepared to grant pardon to US serviceman Daniel Smith, the convicted rapist of Nicole.

And thirdly, even in its latest version, the antiterrorism bill appears to have radically amended the provisions of the Revised Penal Code on crimes and penalties, and the Bill of Rights in the 1987 Constitution.

Needless to say, many responsible citizens of this hapless republic agree with INQUIRER columnist Conrado de Quiros. Indeed, the enactment of this "terroristic" bill will constitute a clear and present danger to the people's civil liberties.

—NELSON D. LAVIÑA,
ambassador (retired),
nlavina2@fastmail.fm

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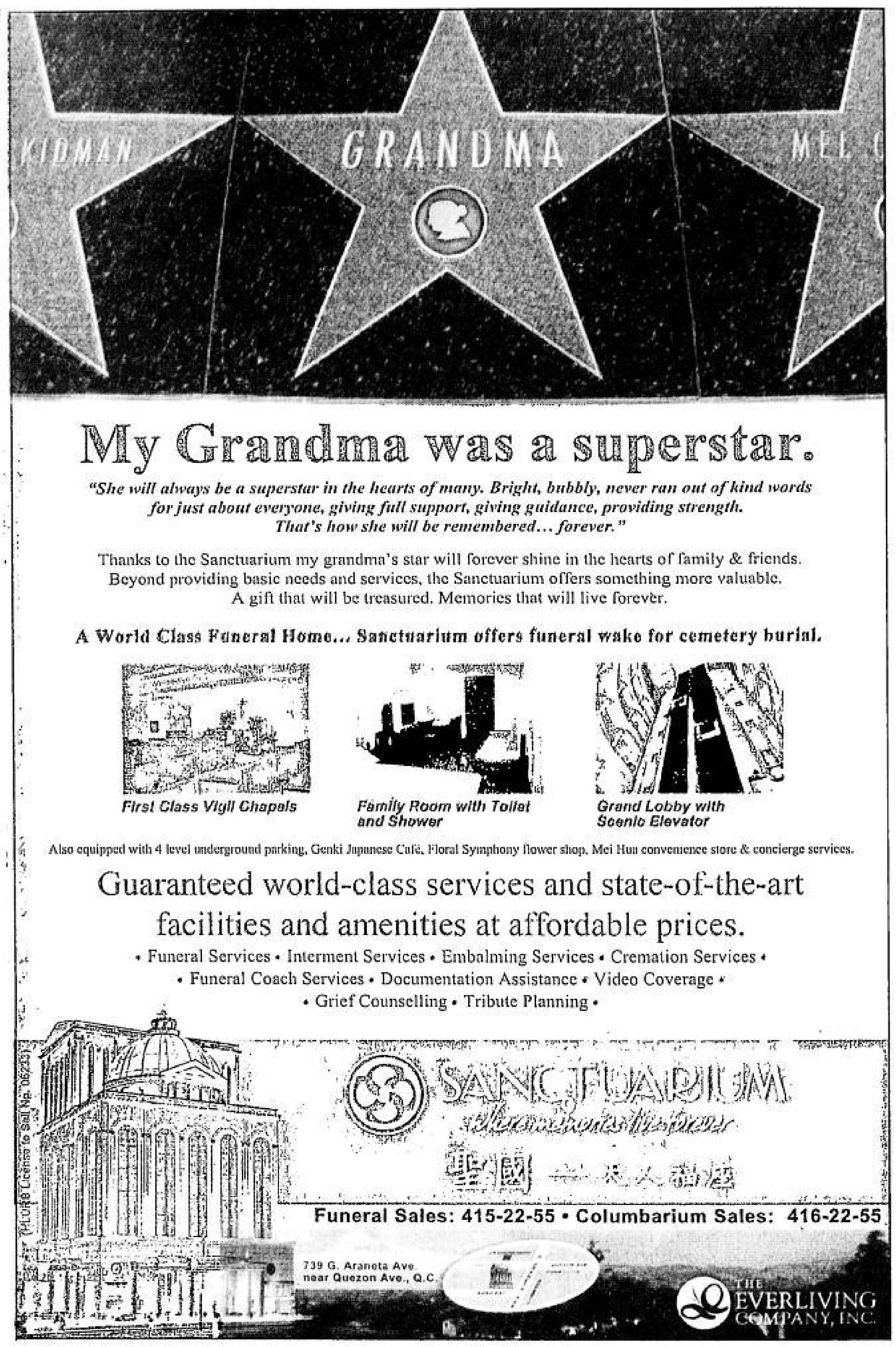

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Guinsaugon mudslide recalled

IRENEA Velasco (standing) and some former residents of barangay Guinsaugon look at their former village which is just across the river. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/RUBEN GREGORIO

By Vicente S. Labro
St. Bernard, Southern Leyte

TIME MAY HEAL grief, but a year is not enough to erase the sad memory of that tragic incident where the entire village and nearly all of the residents of Barangay Guinsaugon in St. Bernard town were buried in mud and boulders.

Today's observance of the first anniversary of the Guinsaugon landslide tragedy will be highlighted by a Mass to be officiated by Bishop Precioso Cantillas of the Diocese of Maasin, the wreath laying and candle lighting ceremonies, the testimonies of survivors, and a floral offering by the survivors.

Other activities include a commemorative climb from Libagon town to "Ground Zero," the commemorative walk from New Guinsaugon, the search and rescue launching led by the youth, local government personnel and other nongovernment organizations, and the commemorative program.

It was a little past 10 a.m. on Feb. 17, 2006, when a big chunk of Mt. Kan-abag slid down into Barangay Guinsaugon, which was nestled on the foot of the mountain, and filled the place with mud and boulders and eventually erased the village from the landscape.

Only very few of those engulfed by the rushing mud were able to escape certain death. Most of the residents who survived were away, either working in nearby villages or were at the St. Bernard proper or other places when the tragedy struck Guinsaugon.

One of those who got swallowed up by the mud and yet managed to survive was Irenea Velasco, a 56-year-old widow, who was in the town proper early that morning to help a daughter-in-law who was about to transfer to a new house with her son.

She returned to their village before 10 a.m. but decided not to join her friends who were going to the school premises to attend the anniversary celebration of their women's club.

In their house, her son Alan, 31 years old and a seaman, was then feeding the pigs they were fattening. Alan's wife Greta was manning their convenience store while the couple's two children were at school. Their two maids were at the house doing their daily chores.

'Landslide! Landslide!'

Velasco said her task was to manage their bakery and that morning, while she was supervising the baker, she heard people shouting in the vernacular, "Landslide! Landslide!"

As people were running in different directions, Velasco ran to their billiard hall nearby and immediately clung on to one of the billiard table's leg when she heard the sound of rushing mud.

"I was helpless and all I could say was 'Lord, I surrender to your will,'" she said in Filipino.

Then there was total darkness, and she noticed that the place she where she had sought refuge did not move much.

"I was under the mud… I think it lasted for about half an hour. I was under the mud…I was just waiting when I will stop breathing," she recalled.

But she said that all throughout her ordeal, "*parang normal lang ang hinga ko* (my breathing was just normal)."

Then she felt some movements and suddenly she felt the billiard table being flung towards the surface, with her still clinging hard on the billiard table's leg. When the swirling stopped, she knew she was already at the surface.

"I could slightly see. Two fragments of window glass panes were embedded in my thigh; I pulled them out," she recalled.

Then she realized that she was inside their store. She was able to get hold of a long stick, which she used to poke the roofing, and make a small hole. She knocked the stick on the roof and cried for help.

She also heard people nearby shouting for help. "Not just one, but many," she said.

Help came in the form of student cadets, about 10 of them, who were conducting their own search operations even if the area was cordoned off because it became risky for people to be in the area of soft earth and mud.

The ROTC cadets from nearby San Juan town plucked Velasco out of the mire and, using the building's door as stretcher, carried her to safety. But along the way they met some soldiers who took over.

"This was why," Velasco said, "in the photo that appeared on the newspaper the soldiers were the ones already carrying me, as if they were the ones who rescued me."

But she never heard anything anymore about those who were shouting for help.

'Vast, vast land'

Guinsaugon was a big village where people were mostly engaged in agriculture.

"The rice field is vast, vast land was planted to coconut, vast abaca land… that's why the residents were all hardworking," she said.

The residents also valued education and work hard to ensure that their children were sent to school. In fact, many of the young people had been able to work abroad and it was a key factor why the village was progressive, said Velasco.

There were 17 seamen in the village, including four of her five sons, she said. This was the reason the place was then known as Seamen's Village.

Guinsaugon also has its own public market and a health center that has oxygen and dextrose and a regular midwife, she proudly said.

But now, her village is forever gone.

Velasco admitted that she was traumatized by her experience. She had been confined at the Anahawan district hospital for about 15 days. Then she moved to a daycare center in Barangay Mahayahay, where she had lived for about two months before staying in a friend's house. She now has a unit at the resettlement site in Barangay New Guinsaugon.

Moving on

Velasco, who was widowed in 1980, lost her son Alan, daughters-in-law Greta and Arlene, and six grandchildren in that tragic incident in Guinsaugon. Her two maids were also killed.

She now has only one grandchild left, the daughter of her son Amor, a seaman who is abroad, and her daughter-in-law Tata, who works at the municipal government of St. Bernard.

But she said that despite her grief, she can already move on with her life.

She recalled that a few days after her rescue, a nun gave her a bible, which she read and read. Finally, she learned to accept her fate. "I have surrendered to God all my worries," she said.

But not all survivors were able to move on after the tragedy.

Josephine Sansol, 37, who lost her 36-year-old partner Tito Sansol, an ice cream maker in Guinsaugon, and their two children, Robina, 12, and Equiben, 8, in the landslide, is still coping with bouts of grief, loneliness and uncertainty.

> Only very few of those engulfed by the rushing mud were able to escape certain death. Most of the residents who survived were away

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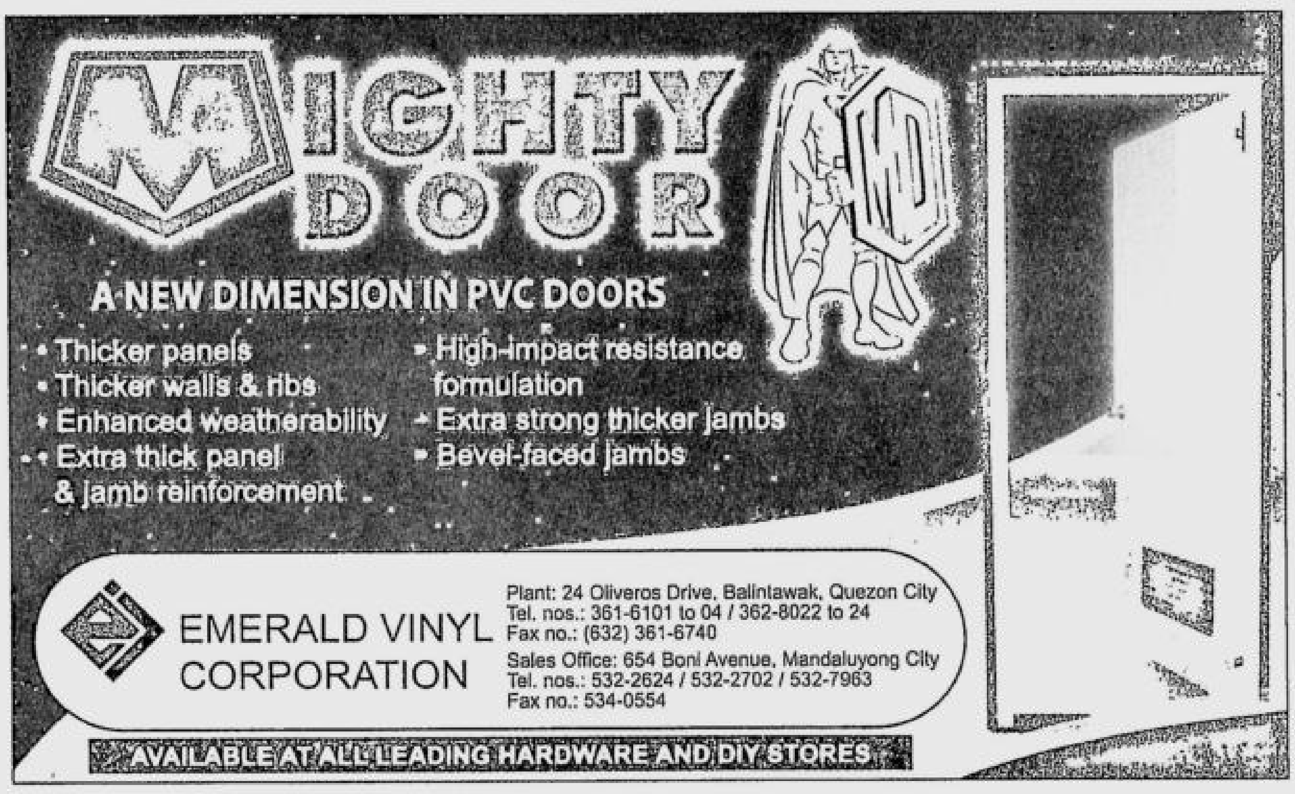

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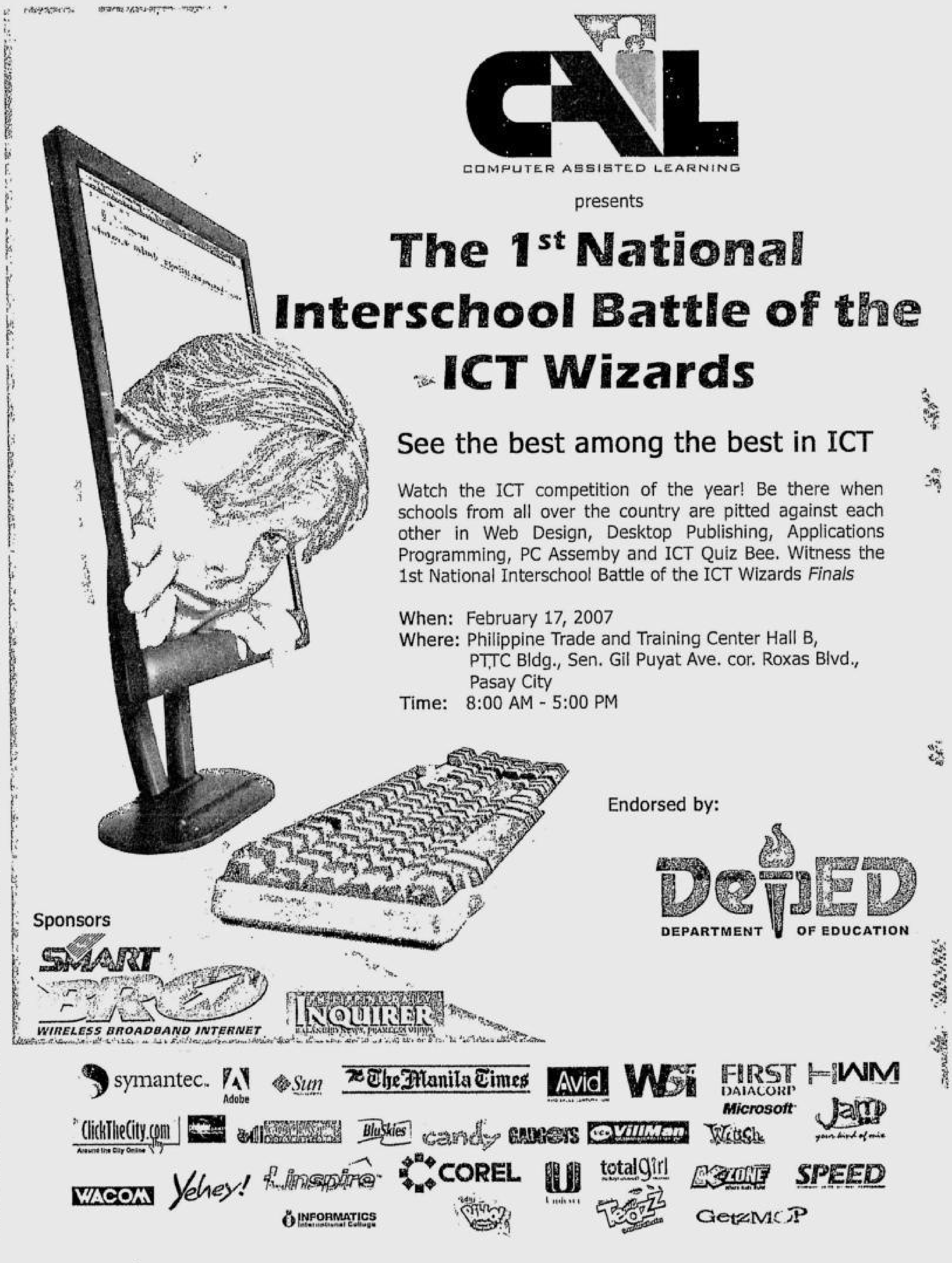

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Plot to derail leftist poll bid seen

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—HOUSE DEPUTY MINORITY LEADER and Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo accused the administration of fabricating criminal charges against militant legislators to prevent party-list groups from regaining their seats in the House of Representatives.

Ocampo said he received a subpoena on Wednesday related to a complaint for murder in the killing of three members of militant groups in Nueva Ecija.

Ocampo, along with Representatives Lisa Maza, Teodoro Casiño and Rafael Mariano, are among those named as suspects in the murder of Danilo Felipe, Jimmy Peralta and Carlito Bayudan, who were separately killed from 2001 to 2004.

"This is part of the political harassment and persecution of the administration to tie us down during the campaign period," Ocampo said in an interview. The legislator came to Iloilo City to attend the Bayan Muna regional convention here.

He said the charges are part of a project initiated by the Inter-Agency Legal Action Group, led by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, to block the electoral bid of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Gabriela Women's Party, Kabataan Party and Suara Bangsamoro.

The party-list legislators are also facing rebellion charges related to the alleged failed coup in February last year.

Ocampo said the party-list groups remain unfazed and are confident of increasing their number of seats in the House despite the cases and the continued killings of its leaders and members. He said 127 Bayan Muna leaders and members have been killed since 2001.

Bayan Muna topped the party-list elections with 1.2 million votes in the 2004 elections. Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela Women's Party got three million votes.

The militant party-list groups aim to increase the number of their seats from six to at least 10 in the May elections.

"If there is no widespread electoral fraud, we will surely win these seats," said Ocampo.

But he acknowledged that the campaign this year would be harder than in 2001 and 2004.

He pointed out that unlike in the previous elections, they are now faced with a "systematic and all-out offensive" by the administration to reduce their chances of winning and gaining more seats.

He said the administration is openly supporting seven pro-administration party-list groups.

"The administration is reserving its worst attack not on the opposition parties but on our parties. But we must stand firm, persevere and win," Ocampo told around 1,000 members and supporters who attended the convention.

LEFTIST legislator Satur Ocampo views the remains of a member of his party, Bayan Muna, who was added to the growing list of murdered Bayan Muna members and leaders. His party, he says, is under attack by the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo. AFP

2 arrested leaders of Red group brought to police headquarters

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—TWO LEADERS OF THE Marxista-Leninistang Partido ng Pilipinas-Rebolusyonaryong Hukbo ng Bayan (MLPP-RHB), who were captured on Feb. 12 in San Juan, La Union, were taken on Thursday to Camp Crame for presentation to Director General Oscar Calderon, Philippine National Police chief.

Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, Ilocos region police director, said the two suspected rebel leaders were Domingo Tarectecan, 52, alias Ka Delfin/Bernie, and Christopher de Guzman, 22, alias Ka Acay.

Tarectecan is the politico-military officer of MLPP-RHB while De Guzman is assigned to the La Union expansion area.

Bataoil said Tarectecan is one of the country's most wanted persons with a reward of P500,000 for his arrest while De Guzman is listed as No. 5 in the insurgency order of battle in the Ilocos region.

De Guzman is also a former member of the RHB Sparrow Unit operating in western Pangasinan.

Police said they confiscated from the two a .9 mm pistol and a USB drive containing documents on the intensified program of the MLPP-RHB in its alleged extortion activities.

One of the documents recovered was a letter to businessmen for the imposition of revolutionary taxes fees while another document delved on the group's assessment of its activities, plans and programs for the past years, Bataoil said.

The two were captured on Feb. 12 by the Ilocos Regional Mobile Group, La Union Provincial Police and the Regional Intelligence Division at the boundary of Duplas and Nagsabaran in San Juan, La Union.

A follow-up operation by the police resulted in an encounter between rebels and the RMG in Barangay Alingbasay in Bagulin, La Union. A female rebel was killed and her two companions were wounded in that encounter.

"Witnesses said they saw the three casualties being carried away by their companions while escaping toward Kapangan, Benguet," Bataoil said.

The MLPP-RHB split from the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army to form the group's so-called "rejectionist" faction.

Bataoil said the rebels are operating in western Pangasinan and Zambales with expansion areas in La Union and nearby provinces.

Intelligence reports showed that Tarectecan was designated to oversee the ideological, political and organizational expansion program of the RHB in La Union and Benguet.

"He is the one leading the program in these provinces which accounted for his presence in La Union at the time of his capture," Bataoil said.

SERIOUS WORK
Personnel of the Commission on Elections remove campaign posters along the Marcos Bridge in Cagayan de Oro City. One of the materials removed was a poster of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., whose son, Aquilino III, is running for senator. Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos is interviewed as his men busy themselves removing illegally pasted campaign materials. Abalos, who was under fire in 2004 for the Hello Garci controversy, vowed to make the coming May elections one of the country's cleanest.
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DOH to check health effects of Petron spill

By David Israel Sinay
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE DEPARTMENT of Health (DOH) plans to establish medical surveillance systems to monitor the long-term effects of bunker oil exposure to human health, six months after the MT Solar I oil spill occurred off Guimaras.

The DOH said exposure to bunker fuel has adverse effects to human health. These include cancer (category 2B as classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer), anemia, low platelet count, spontaneous abortion, birth defects, fatigue, depression, lack of initiative, dizziness, sleep disturbances and impaired attention, among others.

The DOH and a team of experts from the University of the Philippines (UP) College of Medicine-Philippine General Hospital (PGH) National Poison Management & Control Center began studying the health effects of the oil spill right after it occurred in August last year.

On Thursday, Health Undersecretary Ethelyn Nieto presented the team's findings to the media and Guimaras Gov. Rahman Nava.

The provincial government of Guimaras estimated 4,000 households complained of respiratory illness, dizziness, dermatitis and stomachache.

The DOH-UP team concluded that the clinical findings among residents living in the areas were consistent with acute bunker oil exposure.

Of the 594 individuals examined, the team reported that 97 percent had sulfhemoglobinemia while 89.4 percent had methemoglobinemia due to their exposure to bunker oil.

Sulfhemoglobinemia is a relatively rare condition in which sulfide combines with hemoglobin in the blood and occurs in individuals exposed to oxidant compounds.

On the other hand, methemoglobinemia is a blood disorder characterized by the presence of a higher than normal level of methemoglobin in the blood, which is caused by exposure to various chemicals. Methemoglobin is a form of hemoglobin that does not carry oxygen.

The monitoring for hydrogen sulfide gas and volatile organic compounds in Barangays Cabalagnan and La Paz in Nueva Valencia town showed that sulfide gas and other toxic chemicals in the air in these areas exceeded US allowable standards.

The study also showed that six out of nine water samples had elevated levels of nickel, lead and arsenic.

Dr. Lyn Panganiban, of the UP-PGH Poison Center, suggested that residents with abnormal physical and laboratory test findings undergo further medical tests.

Panganiban also recommended that government take steps to strengthen the technical capabilities of health care providers in addressing toxicologic health issues related to the oil spill.

The government has to conduct regular monitoring and implement rehabilitation programs in the province, she added.

Nieto said the government would need some P22 million for the monitoring of the long-term effects of bunker oil exposure to the health of Guimaras residents who had been exposed to the oil.

"The P12 million will be spent for disease surveillance alone. This includes the detection and response to outbreaks and the monitoring and evaluation of the operation, among others," Nieto said.

The DOH has already spent some P5 million for medicines, personnel protective equipment and for the hospitalization of residents. Part of the amount was spent on research, she said.

Man saves dozens of people from grenade blast

COTABATO CITY—A WORKER at a public utility vehicle terminal here saved dozens of people from death or injury when he found a grenade and alerted people in the terminal.

Melchor Canlog was doing his rounds at the terminal around 5 a.m. yesterday when he noticed something on a wooden bench occupied by waiting passengers bound for Parang town in Shariff Kabunsuan.

When Canlog ascertained that it was a grenade, he immediately asked passengers to vacate the bench and run to a safe distance.

As soon as the passengers had fled to a safer area, the grenade exploded without harming anyone.

Supt. Paniares Adap, city police chief, said had it not been for Canlog's presence of mind when he ordered waiting commuters to vacate the wooden bench, many people could have been killed or injured.

Canlog said there was nothing extraordinary in his act.

He said it was part of his job to help ensure the safety of passengers inside the terminal.

"First, I thought of disposing the explosive myself, but when I noticed the absence of its safety lever, I immediately yelled at them to vacate the place," he said.

But Adap maintained that Canlog should be commended for his courage.

He also said the police were investigating the incident.

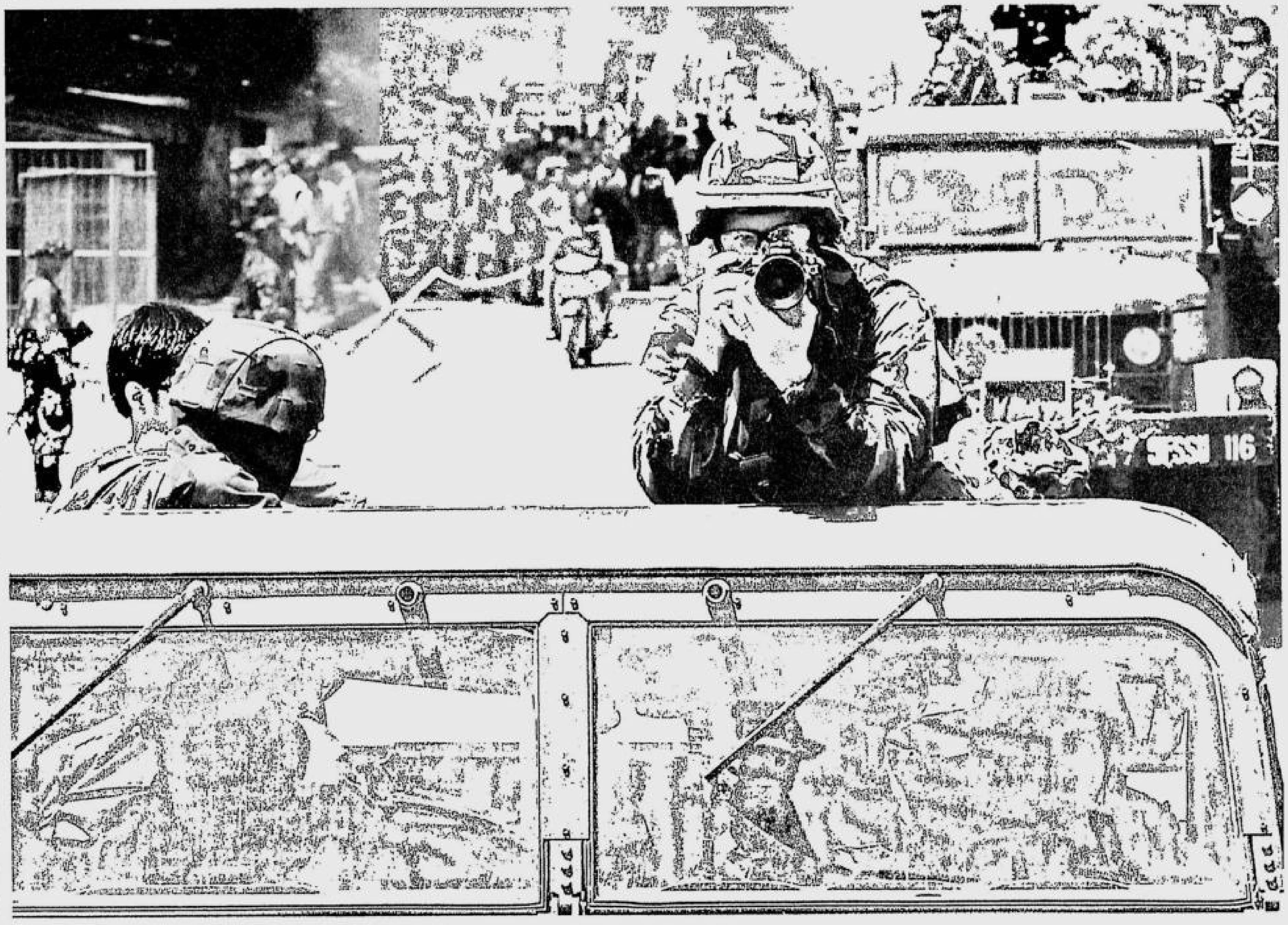
The terminal's management has admitted it has been receiving threats from unknown sources before yesterday's incident.

Adap said they were considering all angles, including the possibility that it was a terror attack.

On Jan. 20, Senior Supt. Samson Obatay, city police operations chief, and his men were on patrol when an unidentified man lobbed a grenade at them.

The grenade failed to explode, though.

Also in January, two powerful blasts killed a garbage collector and wounded eight others here. *Charlie C. Señase, Inquirer Mindanao*



SHOOT 'EM
An American soldier takes aim with his camera as he and dozens of other US Marines and Navy men arrive on Jolo island for military exercises that are focused on medical missions and road-building.
AP

BCDA tells SCTEx contractors to buy new equipment

THE BASES CONVERSION DEvelopment Authority (BCDA) has called on the contractors of the P21-billion Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx) to invest in modern equipment and additional resources to complete the project on schedule.

In a statement, Robert Gervacio, BCDA vice president and spokesperson, said that as of Feb. 7, work on the project had been delayed by 8.31 percent for Package 1 (Subic to Clark segment) and Package 2 (Clark to Tarlac segment) of the SCTEx.

The Kajima-Obayashi-JFE Engineering-Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Co. Ltd. (KOJM) consortium is working on Package 1, while the Hazama-Taisei-Nippon Steel (HTN) joint venture is building Package 2.

The SCTEx is one of the government's key projects in the Arroyo administration's Luzon Urban Beltway super region.

The BCDA also warned the contractors that their contracts could be rescinded if the project incurs a negative slippage of 15 percent or more.

In the same statement, BCDA president Narciso Abaya said the agency was hopeful to complete the 93.7-km SCTEx by yearend despite the delay.

"There is still time to speed up the pace of project construction work," he said.

Abaya, according to the statement, raised the problem on equipment lack and other operational concerns to Tokyo-based Kajima president Mitsuyo Nakamura through a letter sent in February last year.

The BCDA said similar letters were also sent to HTN officials, advising them to adhere to the provisions of their contract and implement catch-up plans so work on the SCTEx could be finished according to target dates.

In spite of these, the Japanese contractors reportedly failed to upgrade their equipment, representing noncompliance with a contract provision mandating that 50 percent of the equipment to be used in the project should be new.

BCDA field engineers said most of the machines, owned by local sub-contractors, were old and inefficient, and often stalled.

Earlier, an engineer involved in the project told the INQUIRER that the SCTEx might not be completed by November as construction firms failed to get complete control of right-of-way (ROW) sites due to protests arising from unresolved expropriation cases and unpaid land claims.

But BCDA officials shrugged off allegations that ROW issues were delaying work on the SCTEx. "These are minor problems that cannot derail the project," they said. *Inquirer Central Luzon*

Lunar New Year becomes part of Baguio City cultural landscape

CHINESE-FILIPINO communities nationwide are preparing to celebrate the start of the Lunar New Year. In Baguio City, the celebration of the so-called Chinese New Year has become part of the city's tradition while in Iloilo City, stalls like these bring out their New Year ornaments.
ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

BAGUIO CITY—WHAT THE CHINESE HAVE been celebrating for 5,000 years has become institutionalized as part of this mountain city's cultural landscape.

"Baguio is the only city north of Manila that officially celebrates the Spring Festival," said acting Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr.

The local Chinese-Filipino community used to celebrate quietly the festival within the confines of their compounds and hotels.

But the city has officially celebrated the festival since 1999 when the city council approved a resolution recognizing the festival not only as part of Baguio's tourist-drawing activities but as part of fostering "better socio-cultural and economic relations" with the Chinese-Filipino community.

"I cannot imagine a Baguio without our Filipino-Chinese brothers and sisters," said Councilor Edilberto Tenefrancia. "Where can we get or eat our favorite pancit (Chinese noodles) for example?"

In celebrating the Spring Festival with the local Chinese-Filipino community, "we are actually celebrating a cultural heritage that dates back thousands of years," he said.

The Spring Festival dates back to about the third millennium BC when the legendary sage, Emperor Yao, noting the close relation of heavenly influences on farming, ordered his astrologers to determine accurately the heavenly solstices and equinoxes to help farmers calendar their crop production.

Yao's astrologers devised a 28-day lunar calendar and plotted it out with the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. The first day of spring is the beginning of the Chinese Lunar New Year, which this year falls on Feb. 18.

The celebration of the Spring Festival is "more logical because this is in harmony with nature," Tenefrancia said. "After everything sleeps or dies during winter, everything springs back to life during spring. The Chinese knew this. That's why they're richer than us," he said.

A prominent Chinese-Filipino doctor based here, Dr. Charles Cheng, underscored the centuries of "symbiotic relation" between Chinese and Filipinos, which dates back when Igorot folk were trading gold with Chinese porcelain products, such as jars, even before the Spaniards came.

This relation, although sidetracked by Spanish and American colonization and the Japanese occupation, still runs deep and continues to be reinforced by intermarriages, which have enhanced the "genetic makeup" of both races, according to Cheng.

This relation, he said, is what the Baguio community is also celebrating as the Chinese-Filipino community invites others to join them in their weeklong Spring Festival festivities.

Feb. 18 is the start of the Year of the Golden (Fire) Pig, which is believed to be an auspicious year for making wealth but not necessarily for "keeping it," Cheng said, citing the pig's materialistic attitude. *Maurice Malanes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

AN ELDERLY couple leads the slicing of the cake after the mass wedding ceremony last Feb. 14 at Lucap Wharf in Alaminos City, Pangasinan

RAY B. ZAMBRANO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

More than 1,000 couples tie knots in mass weddings

THE SUN WAS SETTING. THE SKY WAS clear. Soft wind was blowing from the sea.

It was a most romantic moment and a place to say "I do" for 160 couples who participated in a mass wedding officiated by Alaminos City Mayor Hernani Braganza at the Lucap Wharf, the take-off point to Pangasinan's Hundred Islands National Park (HINP) on Feb. 14, Valentine's Day.

Among their witnesses were Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero, a senatorial candidate and Vice Gov. Oscar Lambino.

Elsewhere on the same day in Lucena City, at least 294 couples, the eldest in their 70s, were married in a mass wedding ceremony, which later became another campaign occasion for election candidates.

Politicians of all stripes made a beeline to greet the newlyweds, with some posing for pictures with every couple.

Almost a thousand couples were married that day: 160 in Alaminos, at least 294 in Quezon and at least 500 in Laguna.

Alaminos

Forty-five of the couples from Pangasinan have been living together for more than five years and have decided to legalize their relationship, some on the prodding of their children, Braganza said.

For three years now, the city government has been holding the mass wedding dubbed as "Hundred Kisses at Hundred Islands."

The first two weddings, in 2004 and 2005, were held at sunrise in Bolo Beach in Barangay Pandan, also overlooking the park.

The activity aims to solemnize marriage among couples in the city who cannot spend for a wedding ceremony and reception, Braganza said.

It is also meant to promote the tourism potentials of the city geared toward the conservation, protection and rehabilitation of the HINP and the rest of the city, he added.

"There are many couples who wanted to get married, but we have to reject them because they were not able to beat the 10-day grace period from the issuance of their marriage license and the wedding date," city information officer Ivy Basila said.

The oldest pair who got married was Teofilo Villanueva, 76, and Agrifina Nebrida, 64. They were married but separated and were living together for 20 years. They got married after their respective partners died.

Another couple, Rosalio Frias, 56, and Dionita Racraquin, 57, have been together for 24 years. Lack of finances hindered their getting married. It was their children who took care of the paper work so they could join the mass wedding.

Lucena

The annual multiple civil wedding ceremony officiated by Lucena Mayor Ramon Talaga Jr. took place at the Queen Margarette Hotel Resort and Restaurant, a classy restaurant located in the outskirts of the city.

Talaga initiated the mass wedding project five years ago.

The city social welfare and development office arranged the mass wedding after discovering that many couples were living together and had reared children of their own without marriage.

The mayor advised all newly-married couples to also renew their vows in a Church wedding.

After the ceremony, the newlyweds shared a cupcake and red wine in a single glass.

To celebrate the occasion, Talaga gifted every passionately kissing couple with P1,000 for posterity.

But after the wedding ceremony, politicians of all stripes made a beeline to greet the newlyweds.

Some of the candidates were also seen posing for pictures with every couple.

A woman provincial board member, who was supposed to deliver a short greeting to the newlyweds, delivered instead a stinging rebuke of her would-be political opponent in the coming May elections.

One of the candidates was heard telling one of the newlyweds and their families not to forget his name in the next election after sliding a few hundred pesos as his "gift."

The oldest couple, Juan, 77, and Soledad, 70, surnamed Berzuela, has 12 children, 30 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

The couple's youngest son was also one of the participating couples in the mass wedding.

Laguna

In Sta. Cruz, Laguna, the municipal government officiated a mass wedding for at least 500 couples on Feb. 12.

Attended by a number of politicians, the mass wedding was presided over by Sta. Cruz Mayor Domingo Panganiban while Egay San Luis, son of former Laguna Gov. Felicisimo San Luis, and Laguna Vice Gov. Edwin Olivarez stood as sponsors.

Among the couples were 96-year-old Belardo Bajin and 69-year-old Angelita Pacoma, both residents of the town.

Bajin, a former soldier and Pacoma, a seamstress, made their vows along with other couples from southern Laguna.

Despite their ages, Bajin and Pacoma decided to finally marry after almost 49 years of living together.

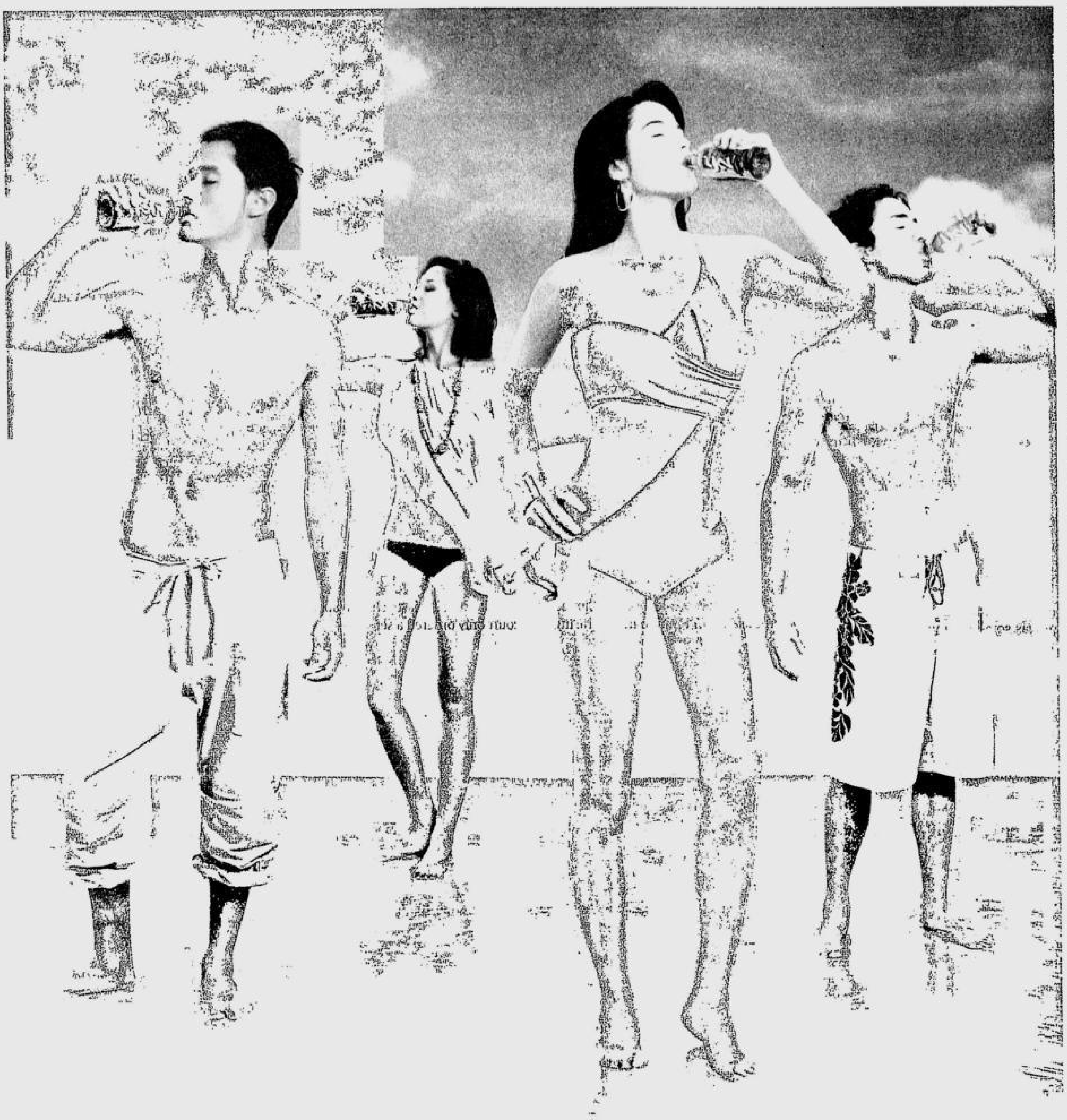
Their wedding has been postponed many times because of financial matters and petty quarrels.

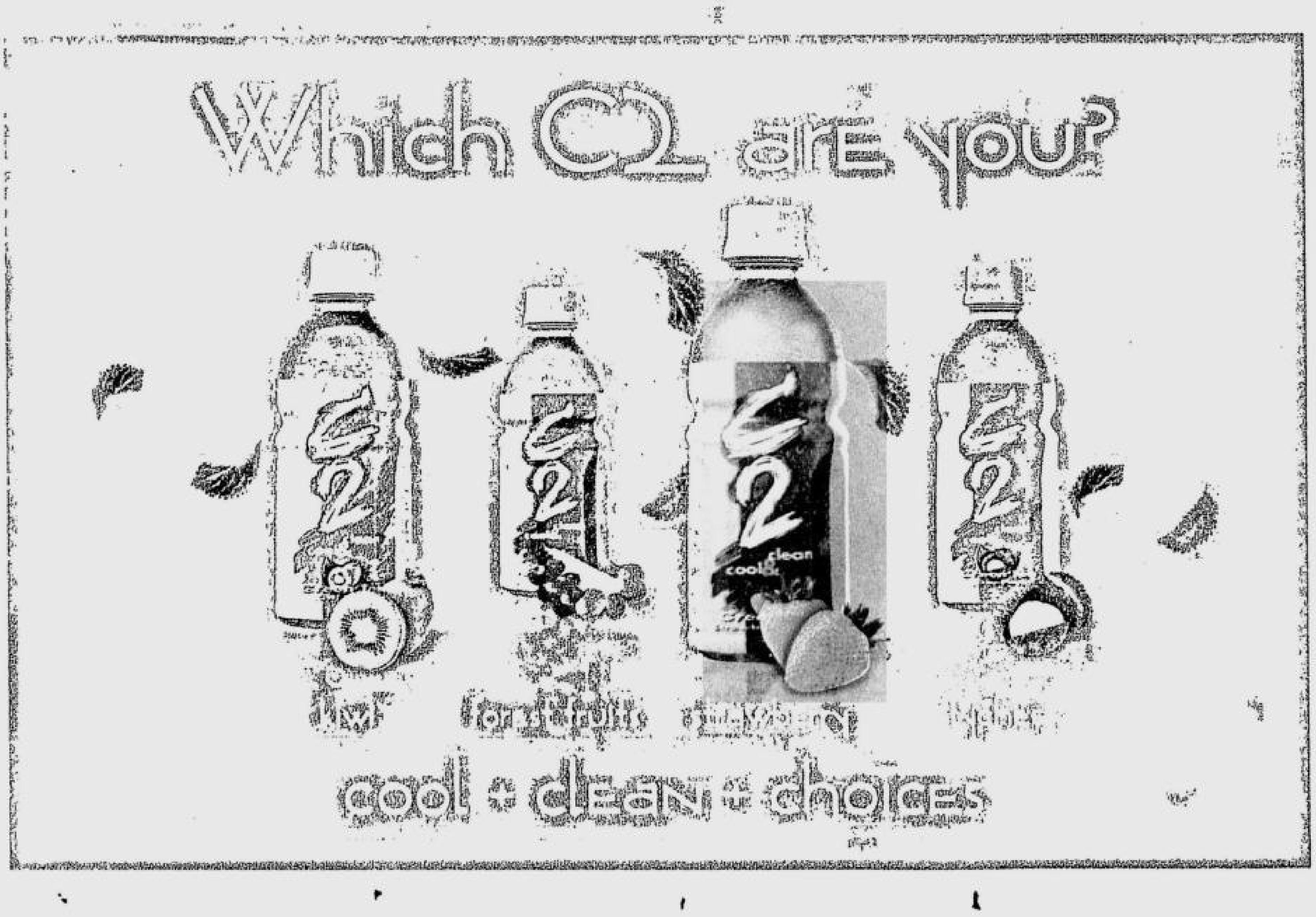
"We are already old so we want our relationship legalized," Pacoma said in Filipino.

The couple has eight children, all of them bearing the surname Pacoma.

"An ordinary wedding would cost around P40,000 while a grand wedding would need more than that," said Noel Soriano, one of the newlyweds.

The municipal government organized the gathering of the couples while the foundation sponsored the food and the gift certificates for the couples. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon; Delfin T. Mallari Jr. and Nina Catherine Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon*





Kings crush Beermen, tie series

Caguioa bags Best Player award

Game Wednesday (*Araneta Coliseum*)
7 p.m.—San Miguel vs Barangay Ginebra

Late Sports

By Musong R. Castillo

CHOT REYES WORE A JACKET WHILE COACHING Game 4 of the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup Finals last night.

He, too, must have felt how cold San Miguel Beer was.

Barangay Ginebra blew the frosty Beermen off the court for the second straight game and the Gin Kings leveled the best-of-seven title series at 2-all following a 146-111 victory at the Araneta Coliseum.

PBA
CAGUIOA

Ginebra packed firepower the Beermen didn't even come close to matching and the Kings actually flirted with the all-time high mark for the most lopsided win before cruising in the fourth period.

"This is still not over, it's just the start," said Ginebra coach Jong Uichico, who actually grappled for words to describe how his team has played the last two games of the best-of-seven series.

"You don't expect it to be this way," Uichico told the INQUIRER. "But you take it the way it is."

Mark Caguioa, a couple of hours after accepting his first career achievement award—the Best Player of the Conference—tossed in 25 points in three quarters to lead the Kings.

It was the highest scoring Finals game in 17 years and Ginebra's total last night made this batch of Kings become the first team since the Anejo crew of the 1990 First Conference to score at least 130 points in two straight title series games.

Jay-Jay Helterbrand added 21 points as a total of six players were in twin digits for Uichico, four of them right in the first half alone when the Kings broke it wide open after just 24 minutes with a 71-49 lead.

"It's hard to tell," Reyes later said, when asked why his team has floundered in the last two games. "I think I'm doing a terrible job as a coach as far as preparing them is concerned."

Things were so in place for the Kings that they were connecting on impossible shots and San Miguel was muffing even elementary ones.

Helterbrand even finished a 1-on-3 break with 10:30 to go, drawing a foul from rookie Gabby Espinas in the process and completing the three-point play for a 120-80 Ginebra lead.

A Mark Macapagal jumper with 8:35 to play actually shoved the Kings to a 124-83 lead, their biggest in the ball game, which threatened the all-time mark in Finals futility which, curiously, the Beermen also hold, a 38-point loss to Alaska in the 1998 All-Filipino.

"The only positive I see coming out of this is that they (Kings) are now the favorites and we the underdogs," Reyes added.

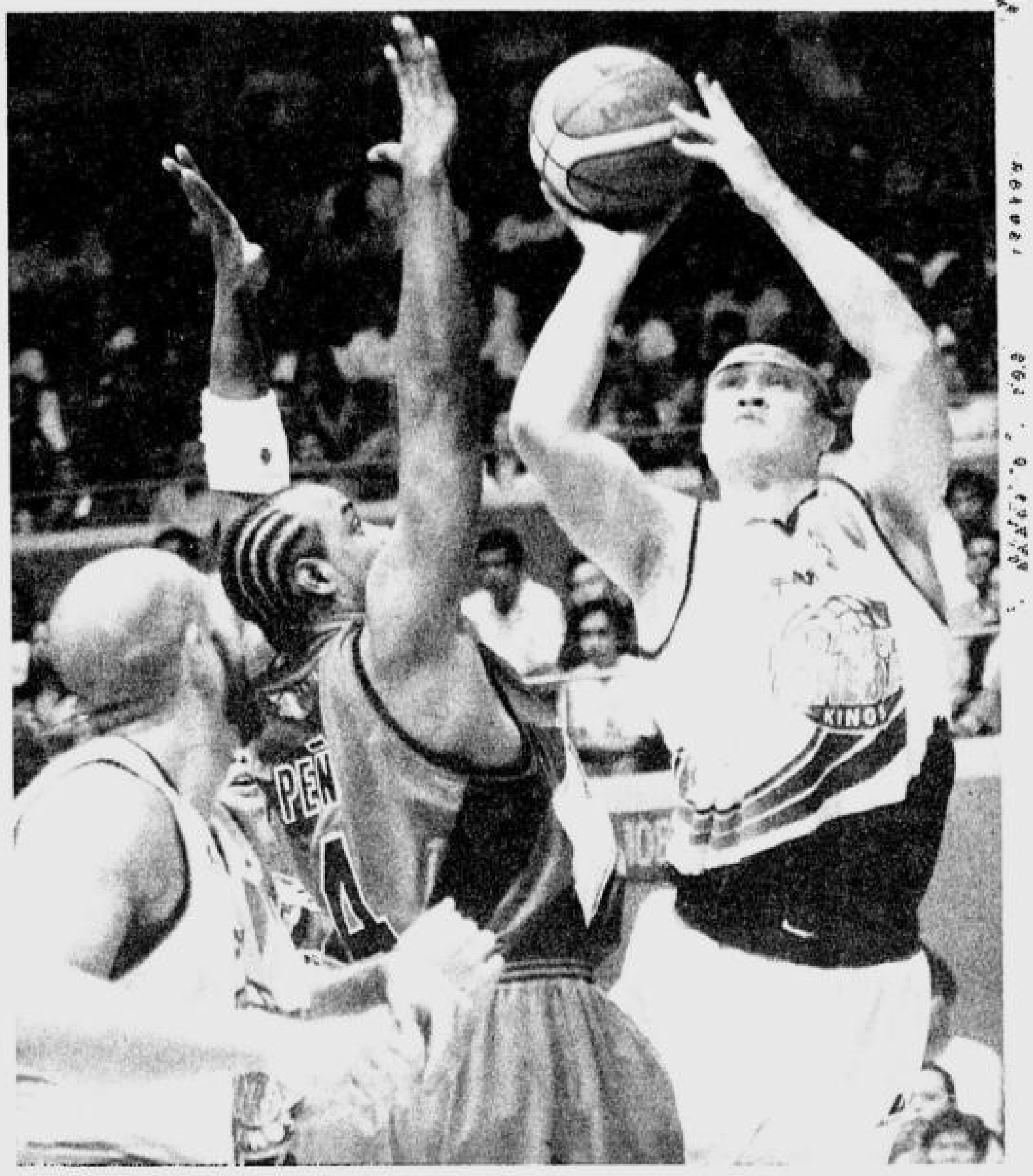
Ironically, Caguioa won his first individual citation less than a month after airing his displeasure with some members of the media, whom he accused of deliberately not voting for him despite his glaring scoring credentials in the past.

The scores:

BARANGAY GINEBRA 146—Caguioa 25, Helterbrand 21, Salvacion 20, Menk 15, Hatfield 14, Abarrientos 11, Tubid 9, Macapagal 8, Mamaril 7, Reavis 7, Holper 5, Seigle 4.

SAN MIGUEL 111—Hontiveros 20, Seigle 18, Pena 18, Calaguio 15, Racela 10, Tenorio 6, Ildefonso 6, Adducul 5, Espinas 4, Tugade 4, Wilson 3, Gonzales 2.

Quarters: 32-24, 71-49, 116-78, 146-111.



ERIK Menk of Ginebra (right) challenges the defense of San Miguel's Dorian Peña (center) at the post while Kings forward Rudy Hatfield looks on. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

SC junks UST bid for retake of nursing test

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SUPREME COURT HAS DENIED with finality the plea of University of Sto. Tomas faculty members and other nurses' groups for a retake of the tainted June 2006 nursing examination.

The decision dashed the hopes of thousands of Filipino nurses raring to go to the United States, especially after American officials picked the Philippines as a testing site for the National Council Licensure Examination, a key requirement for those who want to work in the United States.

The Supreme Court denied the motion for reconsideration of the petitioners appealing against the high tribunal's resolution junking, on the basis of a technicality, its plea to reverse a Court of Appeals' decision on the leakage issue.

Selective retake

In its decision last year, the appellate court only ordered a selective retake of the exam, paving the way for the oath-taking of some 17,000 passers.

"Considering that there is no compelling reason to warrant a modification of this Court's Resolution, the Court resolves to deny reconsideration with finality," the high tribunal said in a Jan. 17 resolution.

In first dismissing the petitioners' plea, the Supreme Court said their action was premature because they should have first filed a motion for reconsideration before the Court of Appeals.

The petitioners had questioned an Oct. 13, 2006 appellate court decision that only those whose grades were affected by the Professional Regulation Commission's recomputation of scores had to retake two of the exam's five tests.

The petitioners said a retake had to be done in order to protect the integrity of the exam. They also questioned the oath-taking of the passers.

Palace moves fast to save …

From page A1

reconsideration of the decision," the President said.

About 17,800 of 42,000 nursing candidates passed the beclouded 2006 exam but the Court of Appeals later ordered 1,687 of the passers to retake tests 3 and 5 following disclosures that answers to those tests had been leaked beforehand.

Ms Arroyo also said she had directed the labor department to "provide financial assistance" to those who would be required to retake the exam "as called for by the CGFNS with the proper body."

Honor must be upheld

"We shall uphold the prestige and excellence of the Philippine nursing profession," she added.

Malacañang had earlier praised US authorities after the US National Council of State Boards of Nursing Profession voted unanimously to make the Philippines a testing center.

Labor Secretary Arturo Brion said he was worried other countries might imitate the United States and also require those who passed the 2006 tests to retake the questioned portions.

"This is okay to me since the retaking would be for those going to the US only, but what if other countries also doubt the results and demand a retake?" Brion said in a press conference.

Next move

He said it was all up to the Professional Regulatory Commission to provide a system for those who wanted to retake.

Brion said he would meet PRC chair Leonor Tipon-Rosero, the nursing board, and representatives of the graduates to determine what the government's next move should be.

"Any decision reached should remove once and for all the cloud of doubt that continues to hang over the exams but without putting the Court of Appeals decision in a bad light," he added.

Rosero said that although a PRC license was not needed to practice in the United States, it was needed for those who seek an immigrant visa.

Rosero said that of the 1,687 whom the appellate said would have to retake the tests, 1,200 retook them and 90 percent of them passed.

US action foretold

"We will study what we'll do about it," Rosero said of the CGFNS action.

Rosero said they would have an initial meeting today, to be followed by another one on Monday.

"That was our point from the start. That's what we were worried about. That's what we wanted to prevent," said Pia Bersamin- Embuscado, lawyer of the University of Sto. Tomas Faculty of Nursing Association, referring to the CGFNS decision.

Now, there is nothing more that could be done except to abide by the CGFNS decision, she said.

"It took an international body to tell us that there was something wrong with the exam," Bersamin-Embuscado said.

She expressed hope that, with the future of so many Filipino nurses at stake, the Supreme Court would still give them another chance. *(Story on Page A19.)*

No hiring them

She noted that , ironically, the high court's earlier decision to deny the UST association's motion to allow the board passers to retake portions of the exam came a day before the CGFNS announced its own decision.

"I pity the nurses of that batch because of the difficulties they are facing. And to think, we are so proud of Filipino nurses," she said.

She said she had received feedbacks that employers had been accepting applications from some June 2006 passers but they remained only that—applications.

"No one is hiring them," she said.

All are victims

Maria Grace Lacanaria, nursing school dean of the Saint Louis University in Baguio, said many of the licensing applicants who exposed the 2006 cheating were covered by the CGFNS ban and were now applying to take a new examination so they could work in the United States.

"They are all victims, but the government is still too slow in resolving the scandal. People already admitted the cheating but nothing has happened," she said.

Lacanaria said: "The president of the Philippine Nurses Association chapter in the US already warned us in December when she cameover that [a CGFNS work ban] is the likely consequence if the government [continues to stall]."

"This was the reason we worked strongly to have everyone who took the June exam to repeat the tainted sets of examinations," she said.

The option to retake these tests divided the ranks of the nursing profession because many aspiring nurses who passed the 2006 exam urged the PRC to honor their licenses.

Not end of the road

Lacanaria said her group was not surprised when the CGFNS advised the government to offer the 2006 examinees a retake to make them eligible for a CGFNS certificate.

The certificates are necessary before nurses seeking immigration status when they apply for US employment can take the US National Council Licensure Examinations (NCLEX).

"But it is not the end of the road for the June 2006 batch. Other [work] opportunities have opened in Japan and other countries," she said.

"But for many [aspiring nurses], it is really the US that is the goal. The US offers better incentives and higher pay compared to work available in the United Kingdom and Japan," she said. *With reports from Nikko Dizon and Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

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Police, NBI confiscate shabu chemicals

Could be worth P6B when processed, says NBI

NBI AGENTS inspect chemicals which could be used to manufacture shabu after a raid in a Caloocan warehouse yesterday.

RAFFY LERMA

By Nancy C. Carvajal

RAW CHEMICALS, THAT COULD BE WORTH P6 billion when processed into methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu, were seized yesterday morning from an abandoned building on a busy street in Caloocan City.

Armed with a warrant, the National Bureau of Investigation Special Action Unit (NBI-SAC) and local police raided the three-story building at No. 144 P. Sevilla St. 4th Ave., West Grace Park.

The raid yielded 22 drums of chloroform, crates of ephedrine solution, sodium peroxide, acetone, and gallons of unidentified liquids.

The confiscated chemicals were said to be used in the manufacture of shabu.

The warrant was issued by Caloocan City Executive Judge Victoria Esabela Paredes

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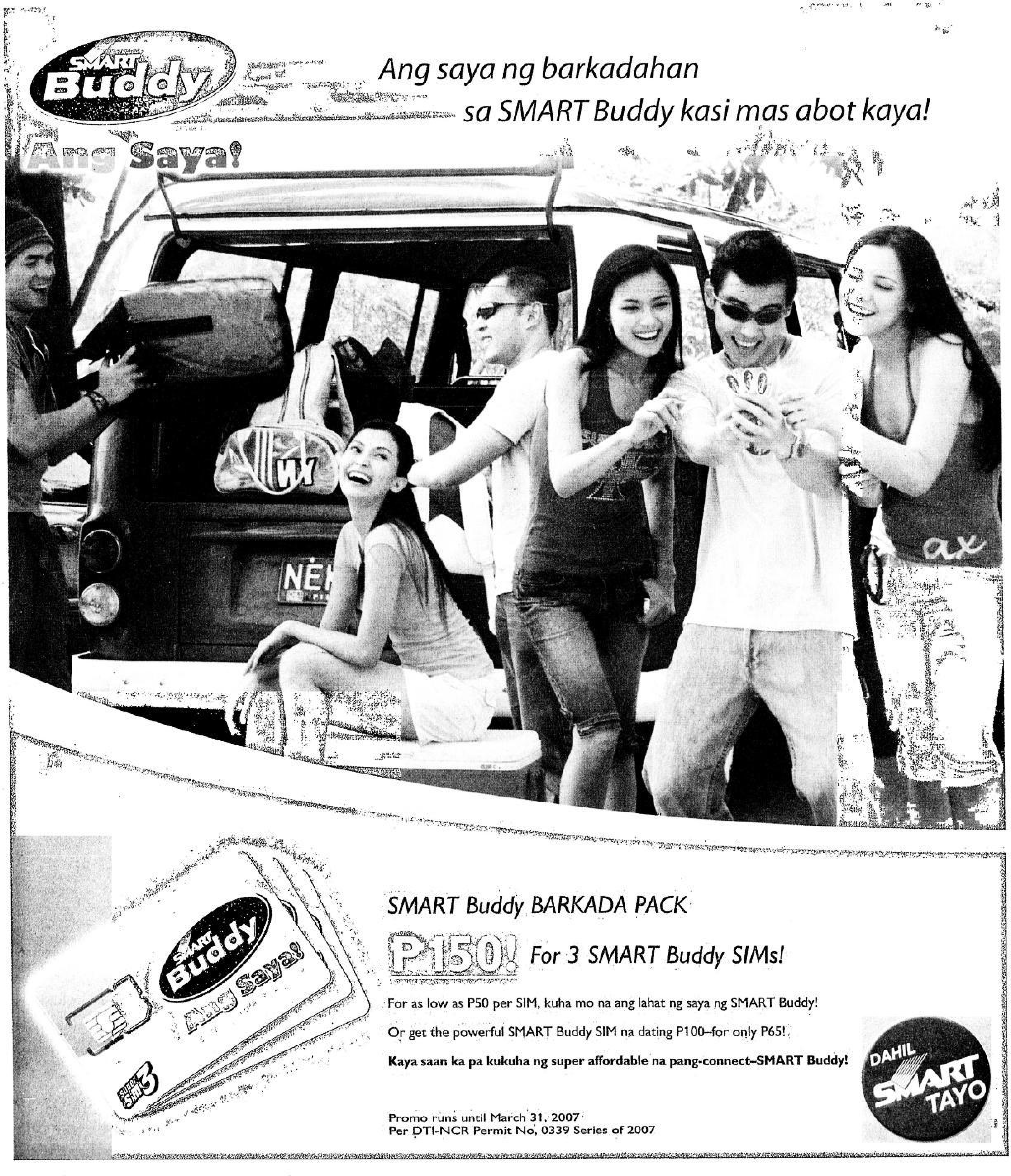

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A (Chinese) New Year wish for clean elections

By Tina G. Santos

FOR MANY RESIDENTS OF THE CHInese-Filipino community in Binondo, Manila, no (Chinese) New Year gift can be sweeter than having meaningful elections this year.

"We fervently pray that the coming elections will have a new meaning," said Teresita Ang See, outspoken anticrime crusader, when asked about her New Year thoughts as chair of the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order.

"But at the end of the day, no matter what your government does, we, as citizens, would still have to do our part," she added.

Other Binondo residents and office workers interviewed by the INQUIRER had the same wish for the new year: "Peace, prosperity and an end to kidnappings."

"I wish to be able to travel safely on the streets or have total peace of mind, free from worries that kidnappers can abduct people as they please," said Kristine Yee, daughter of a restaurant owner.

"We can't help but worry especially now that it's election season. We have been hearing reports that kidnapping cases increase during this time," added a 23-year-old son of a wealthy business establishment owner in the area.

But Ang-See noted that there had been a lull in kidnappings. "We hope that this is permanent," said Ang-See, also the president of the Binondo-based Kaisa Heritage Foundation. "I wish there will come a time that we would no longer need an anticrime group."

Despite her optimism, security was a main concern in yesterday's colorful celebrations in Binondo to make sure "gate-crashers" were kept out.

Manila policemen drew up an elaborate plan to secure Chinatown from kidnap gangs who could take advantage of the Chinese New Year revelry and use it as a distraction to carry out their plans, said Manila Police District acting chief Senior Supt. Danilo Abarzosa.

He added that additional policemen, as well as K9 units, had been deployed to secure revelers and residents.

Chinese-Filipinos lavishly welcomed yesterday the Year of the Fire Pig. Firecracker explosions occasionally overpowered the beats of drums and cymbals in the traditional dragon dance.

Red banners with greetings written in Chinese characters added color to the streets of Tomas Mapua, Quintin Paredes and Ongpin.

On almost every corner and every few meters, stalls sold *tikoy*, the rice cake associated with the celebration of the Chinese New Year. Stores were decorated with little red envelopes called "*ang pao*" containing gift money that were picked up by dragon dancers as they hopped from one door to the next.

Concert promoter arrested for estafa

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A CONCERT PROMOTER, WHO allegedly defrauded a Chinese businesswoman of P10 million, was arrested Thursday by operatives of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) inside a bar on West Avenue, Quezon City.

Jacob Fernandez, 32, reportedly the talent manager of singer Faith Cuneta and a resident of No. 423 Ambuklao St., Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City was nabbed based on an arrest warrant issued by Parañaque City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Judge Leoncia Real-Dimagiba.

The RTC judge found Fernandez guilty of three counts of estafa, according to NBI National Capital Region chief Ruel Lasala.

Fernandez was sentenced to 20 year in jail for each count of estafa and ordered to pay the complainant P9 million, including interest, from October 2003.

Lasala said the complainant, who requested anonymity, was the mother of the suspect's former girlfriend. She said she trusted Fernandez because he was engaged to her daughter. The complainant said she initially lent the suspect P5 million in 2003.

Fernandez, who said he would use the money for his business, issued a post-dated check and borrowed another P5 million even before his check could be encashed.

The businesswoman sought the NBI's assistance when both checks bounced.

In a press conference at the NBI where he was presented to the media, Fernandez denied borrowing money from the complainant. He said the money he got was supposed to be used to buy supplies for their wedding.

"The complainant filed the case against me because she was mad I broke the engagement and refused to marry her daughter for personal reasons," the suspect said. Fernandez, who is detained at the NBI jail, said he would file an appeal in court.

MISS MANDALUYONG CROWNED
Mandaluyong Mayor Neptali M. Gonzales II and his wife Queenie crowned Miss Mandaluyong 2007 and her court last Feb. 14. With Miss Mandaluyong Mhyrtle Frances 'Chaz' Bugarin (center) are (from left) Maria Eloisa M. Limpo, 3rd runner-up; Janiz T. Pantalla, 1st runner-up; Kirsten Aleli B. Gabriel, 2nd runner-up; and Pierra Bianca A. Francisco, 4th runner-up. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sharon's Kiko a 'topnotcher'

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FOUR DAYS INTO THE CAMpaign period, Sen. Francis Pangilinan, who is seeking a fresh term, emerged as "topnotcher" yesterday in Pasig City.

Pangilinan had the most number of campaign posters confiscated by the city government as these were not put up in common poster areas.

During an operation Thursday night, the Pasig City Traffic and Parking Management Office tore down about 500 tarpaulin posters of the senator hanging from electrical posts and trees on Rodriguez Avenue.

Pangilinan is a guest candidate of the so-called Genuine Opposition (GO).

His fellow GO guest candidate, Senate President Manuel Villar, was second. TPMO operatives confiscated about 200 tarpaulin posters from posts and trees.

The police was acting on orders to remove all streamers, posters and other campaign materials installed, pasted or hung outside common poster areas designated by the Commission on Elections.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said earlier putting campaign materials in non-designated places was a "criminal act."

The police also confiscated about a hundred illegally placed posters of administration candidate Edgardo Angara during the two-hour operation.

TPMO assistant chief SPO4 Cecilio Santos told the INQUIRER his office would conduct operations day and night to tear down illegally placed propaganda materials.

Members of the "Task Force Tanggal," the TPMO is responsible for areas in the city's second district while the Batas ng Ciudad Enforcement Unit is in charge of the first district.

The two offices had a joint operation Wednesday night, bringing down almost 400 illegally placed posters and streamers.

Police, NBI confiscate . . .

From page A21

against three "suspected members of the Hong Kong triad."

The chemicals were stored on the high-ceilinged ground floor of the old building supposedly rented by Robert Lee, Erick Diaz and James Lee. No one was arrested during the raid.

"The raw materials can produce at least 2,000 kilos of shabu worth P6 billion," NBI-SAC chief Vicente de Guzman said.

The volume of the chemicals was the second highest confiscated by authorities in more than two years.

Value

In 2004, some P13.6 billion worth of ephedrine or 68,000 kilos were confiscated in different raids conducted by various law enforcement units in Bataan and Bulacan. De Guzman said the estimate was based on the street value of a kilo of shabu estimated at P3 million.

Among the confiscated items from the Caloocan building were porcelain funnels, filter paper and oil pumps, weighing scale, beakers, and other equipment used in the manufacture of illegal drugs.

De Guzman said the NBI received a tip from a concerned citizen about deliveries of chemicals and equipment to the building that reportedly began in November 2006.

According to Caloocan City police head Supt. William Macavinta, the confiscated chemicals reportedly came from China and were intended for the illegal drugs trade of the Hong Kong triad in the Philippines.

"We believe the chemicals were meant to be used in the manufacture of shabu or the building was used as a transshipment area, " Macavinta said.

He said the building was also raided by the police in 2005 "for the illegal manufacture of Philips products."

During that raid, he said police discovered that the persons renting the building used several aliases.

Antonio Co, the area's barangay leader said that no permit was issued for the use of the building "because we thought the building was unoccupied since a 'for rent sign' was still hanging on the front wall."

A woman who answered calls made to two telephone numbers listed on the sign, which was partly written in Chinese, refused to comment on the incident.

"This is the right number but we could not give our names or make any comment because we do not know you," the woman told the INQUIRER.

The police chief identified the compound owner as Juanito Cardenas, a resident of Valenzuela City.

Reward

Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri, who was at the site, asked the NBI and the local police to dig deeper into the incident.

He also offered a reward to anyone who could provide information to authorities on the existence of any drug dens in the city.

He said the identity of the real owner of the building should be revealed, as well as the persons maintaining the suspected shabu laboratory.

Makati bans food inside City Hall

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A TABLE COVERED WITH A green cloth beside the Makati City Hall's main entrance was loaded with boxes of *tikoy* (Chinese rice cakes), plastic bags of fruits and vegetables, and take-out food.

They were not for an early banquet to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

The City Engineer's Office had just set a new policy prohibiting employees and visitors from bringing food items inside the swanky 23-story building.

In a memorandum to all department heads dated Feb. 7, City Engineer Nelson Morales said the bringing of food and eating inside the offices were strictly prohibited. He instructed all security guards to implement the new policy without exception in a separate directive on Feb. 12.

Apart from food, all types of audio appliances for personal use are not allowed inside the building.

Starting early this week, guards at the building's main door carefully inspected bags of employees and visitors and asked them to leave food bags on the table.

If an item was a gift for an employee, the guards gave the visitor a stub allowing the recipient to claim the package later.

The ban was intended to eliminate rodents and cockroaches in the building, a security guard, who refused to be named, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

But the new policy did not sit well with some employees and visitors. A regional trial court judge said people like him, who barely had time to eat out because of their workload, needed to bring in food.

"What if the employees have a special diet to follow? There's no prescribed food available for them in the canteen," the judge, a diabetic, said.

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Why some judges are assassinated

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THERE IS "CLEAR AND PRESENT danger" to the lives of judges and justices following the assassination of 13 judges since 1999, according to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

Are you shocked by the news, given the items about the blatant and shameless corruption of judges and justices that have been featured in this corner lately?

So long as judges and justices demand money and double-cross litigants who pay them off, their lives will continue to be at risk.

This is not to say that the judges who were assassinated were corrupt. Some of them were killed because they refused to be pressured. But I'm sure some of them double-crossed litigants who had paid them off.

Two Makati judges who extort from opposing parties in a lawsuit are "ripe" for the kill if you ask me. A litigant who was double-crossed by one of these judges tried to hire an assassin but was talked out of it by his lawyers.

I won't be surprised if in the future, a member of the Court of Appeals is assassinated because of an illegal deal gone sour.

Based on the total number of judges and justices, the percentage of corrupt justices is higher than that of judges. There are so many judges throughout the country while there are only a handful of justices in the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and Sandiganbayan.

* * *

I find it ridiculous when the judiciary whines about judges getting killed like flies when it knows that some of the victims were pests.

Somebody complained to this writer that he gave P250,000 in "earnest money" to a Court of Appeals justice so he would be acquitted in a criminal case. The rest of the amount would have been paid after the decision came out.

Indeed, the decision came out, but it was to uphold his conviction by a lower court. My complainant found out later the justice received a much bigger amount from the plaintiff.

Now, are you still surprised why some members of the judiciary get assassinated? To paraphrase comedian Woody Allen, some homicides are accidental while some are praiseworthy.

* * *

A girlfriend of a high official at the Department of Interior and Local Government goes around with at least two bodyguards.

The pretty girl is much younger than the DILG official's wife who doesn't have any bodyguards.

What does this mean? Either the official loves his girlfriend more than his wife, or he's the jealous type. *Ayaw niyang masingitan.*

The friends of the DILG official say you can't blame him. His previous girlfriend, a beauty queen, reportedly left him for a handsome and dashing local official of a Southern Tagalog province a couple of years ago.

That's why, they say, this official provides bodyguards to his present girlfriend. The bodyguards have a two-fold purpose: to keep his girl out of harm's way and to keep away suitors.

***

I chanced upon Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes and Rep. Antonio Alvarez of the province's first district having lunch at an upscale Japanese restaurant in Makati yesterday.

I was pleasantly surprised at the post-Valentine reconciliation of my two friends. Reyes and Alvarez were close friends until they parted ways bitterly two years ago because of politics. But now they're friends again.

***

Even after this corner exposed the daily jueteng take—P200,000—of a top police official, Philippine National Police Chief Oscar Calderon has not ordered an investigation. Why?

EASY DOES IT
A young girl performs for revelers at a program in Makati City yesterday in preparation for the celebration of the Chinese New Year on Sunday.
REUTERS

Another SUV lost to car thieves

By Miko L. Morelos

CAR THIEVES STRUCK AGAIN in Quezon City on Thursday, taking a high-end sports utility vehicle (SUV) at gunpoint from its driver, police said.

A report by the anticar theft unit of the Quezon City police said the victim, Jonas Silva Sr., 48, was driving a 2003 Porsche Cayenne Turbo along Katipunan Avenue late in the evening of Feb. 15.

Around 10:30 p.m., Silva was passing by Katipunan Avenue corner Boni Serrano Street when a black Tamaraw FX cut through his lane and blocked his path, according to the report.

Silva, a car mechanic, was on his way to his shop where the vehicle owned by Rolf Wiltscheck, a German national, was due for a checkup.

Two men carrying guns of a still undermined type, alighted from the vehicle, approached the side where Silva sat and pointed the guns at him, the report said.

The suspects forced the driver out of the SUV and entered the vehicle.

The report added that there were two more suspects inside the Tamaraw FX.

After taking over the Porsche, the bandits sped off towards north of Katipunan Avenue.

Silva immediately went to a nearby police precinct at Libis to report the incident.

Authorities then alerted its mobile units on patrol and put up a road block at Blue Ridge A and Castro Street.

Police said the estimated value of the Porsche Cayenne Turbo ranged from P6 to 7 million in the market.

New source of water for Munti residents

By Julie M. Aurelio

MUNTINLUPA CITY RESIDENTS now have a new source of clean water 16 hours a day.

Mayor Jaime Fresnedi recently inaugurated a water refilling station in Pacwood site, Barangay Tunasan that would service water-less areas in the city.

The water refilling station will be open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Mayor Fresnedi assured the residents that the water from the station is clean and safe to drink.

The station is a vital addition to the the six water tanker trucks roving in the city that supplies depressed areas with potable water.

The Maynilad Water Company had earlier installed water connections in different subdivisions to address the problem of drinking water in the city.

Meanwhile, Parañaque City Mayor Florencio Bernabe vowed to improve the water delivery system for residents of Barangay BF.

"We appeal to the residents of Barangay BF, especially those living inside the subdivisions, to be patient. We all know we still have to resolve a number of technical problems that cannot be solved at once," said City Administrator Noli Aldip.

Aldip said water currently being supplied to Barangay BF coming from the main pipeline along Dr. A. Santos Avenue (formerly Sucat Road) is just the first stage in the local government's program providing the community with potable water.

Supply line

Maynilad recently opened its supply line along President's Avenue from the main pipe on Dr. A. Santos Avenue with an initial water pressure of seven pounds per square inch.

With the new line in place, the water supply has been made available to households near the Tropical Supermarket near the BF gates.

In due time, Adlip said Maynilad would increase the water supply to service nearby subdivisions.

"But we still have to get the developer's go-signal to allow the water company's access to the existing distribution network inside the subdivision's 74 enclaves," the city administrator added.

Adlip also appealed to BF residents to help convince the subdivision developer to allow Maynilad to use the existing water distribution facility in the area.

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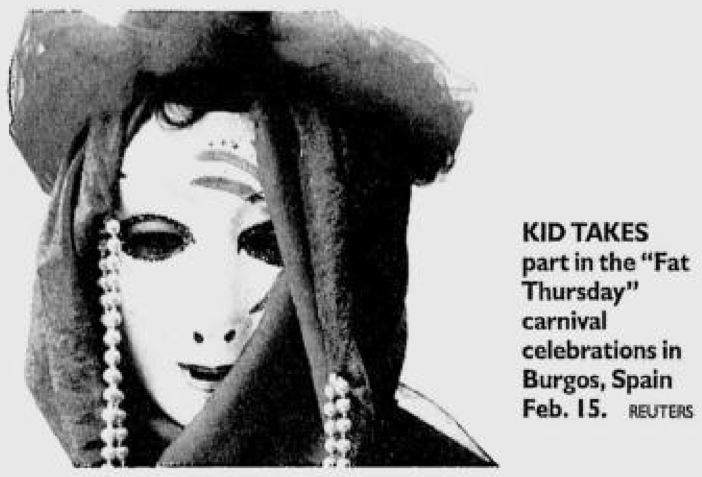
DAHIL SMART TAYO

UN: In rich countries, kids in US, UK are worse off



KID TAKES part in the "Fat Thursday" carnival celebrations in Burgos, Spain Feb. 15. REUTERS

BERLIN—THE UNITED STATES and Britain have ranked at the bottom of a UN survey of child welfare in 21 rich countries that assessed everything from infant mortality to whether children ate dinner with their parents or were bullied at school.

The Netherlands, followed by Sweden, Denmark and Finland, finished at the top while the US was 20th and Britain 21st in the rankings released Wednesday by Unicef in Berlin.

One of the study's researchers, Jonathan Bradshaw, said children fared worse in the US and Britain—despite high overall levels of national wealth—because of greater economic inequality and poor levels of public support for families.

"What they have in common are very high levels of inequality, very high levels of child poverty, which is also associated with inequality, and in rather different ways poorly developed services to families with children," said Bradshaw, a professor of social policy at the University of York in northeast England.

"They don't invest as much in children as continental European countries do," he said.

Bradshaw cited thin day care services in both countries, and poorer health coverage and preventative care for children in the US.

The study gave the US and Britain low marks for the high number of single-parent families and the incidence of risky behaviors among children, such as drinking alcohol and sexual activity.

The US was 20th and Britain 21st in the category focusing on relationships, based on the percentage of children who lived in single-parent homes or with stepparents, as well as the number who ate the main meal of the day at least once a week with their families. That category also counted the proportion of children who said they had "kind" or "helpful" relationships with other children.

In Washington, US State Department spokesperson Paul Denig was highly critical of the report, noting that the authors acknowledged in effect that their data "does not support their conclusions and rankings." *AP*

New cell phones to both empower, imperil children

BARCELONA, SPAIN—THE DANGERS and opportunities of the Internet are soon to be brought to mobile phones, industry experts predicted this week, raising serious questions about how parents can control what their children view and who they contact.

Most kids use their computers at home, making Internet surveillance easier, but a mobile phone is a personal device by design and a jealously guarded symbol of independence for many.

Fully-fledged mobile Internet access still eludes network operators, but they are already expanding their services and have a declared goal of replicating the computer Internet experience on mobile phones.

"Clearly there is more content on an open Internet site (than on a mobile Internet site)," said Vodafone marketing director Frank Rovekamp at the mobile phone industry's biggest trade show, 3GSM.

"But we are opening up and so there is more access to information than there used to be." Fears about pedophilia and cyber-bullying drive calls for more parental oversight, but the risk of high bills, antisocial behavior and the problem of injudicious calling in schools also favor tighter discipline.

"The technology exists to be able to govern, censure and guide," says Michael Anderson, senior vice president of Telcordia, a software company that helped Disney develop one of the first mobile phones for children.

But many believe that phone network operators have been slow to integrate functions allowing parents to vet their children's behavior and limit their phone use.

"What you can see now is the very early stages of operators providing choices, such as whether you have adult content or not," said Ajay Nigan, new product manager of VeriSign, an Internet security software maker.

"As they offer more services they have to provide these options," he said. *AFP*

Qaida leader hurt; Iraqi leaders mum

BAGHDAD—IRAQI LEADERS remained tight-lipped Friday on reports by security sources that the Egyptian leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, had been wounded in a gunbattle and was on the run.

"I cannot confirm this information just now," said Iraqi defense ministry spokesperson Qassim al-Mussawi after state television reported that Masri had been hurt in a clash with Iraqi troops in Dhuluiyah, north of Baghdad.

US military officials referred queries to the Iraqi government, and the Iraqi interior ministry spokesperson was not available for comment.

An Iraqi defense official who asked not to be identified said the only evidence the army had that it had wounded al-Masri was a report from "soldiers who said they saw him escape." According to an account by another security official, soldiers operating in Dhuluiyah, near a major US base in Balad, wounded Masri and killed a senior aide, Abu Abdullah al-Majemaai.

Fighters detained following a gunbattle with Iraqi soldiers reportedly said Masri had been wounded, and blood was said to have been found in an orchard near where the fighters made their stand, he said.

Masri reportedly took command of al-Qaida's Iraqi wing after a US air strike killed his predecessor, the Jordanian militant Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, in July last year.

US officials say he was trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan and is an expert in building car bombs. *AFP*

Passengers overpower jet hijacker

MADRID, SPAIN—PASSENGERS overpowered an armed man who hijacked a Mauritanian plane and took it to Spain's Canary Islands, a Spanish Interior Ministry official said.

Carolina Darias said the man was arrested when police boarded the Air Mauritania 737 shortly after the aircraft landed Thursday at Gando military base, outside Las Palmas city's international airport on Gran Canaria island.

Of the 71 passengers—mostly Spaniards and Mauritanians—21 were treated for slight injuries, a Las Palmas police spokesperson said. The most serious was a pregnant woman treated for severe shock.

Police said the man had been carrying two loaded handguns.

Mauritanian police said the hijacker's motive was not terrorism. Mohamed Ould Mohamed Cheikh, Mauritania's top police official, said the hijacker was a Moroccan from Western Sahara and wanted to immigrate to France.

The man had tried many times to obtain a French visa at that country's embassy in the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott, where he had lived for a few months, said Mohamed. The hijacker's identity wasn't given.

The Boeing 737, with eight crew, was hijacked after leaving the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott at 4:30 p.m. It was bound for a stopover at Nouadhibou in the north of the West African country before flying to Las Palmas.

Air Mauritania director Mohamed Ould Aoufa said the hijacker demanded to go to France but after the crew refused because of a lack of fuel the plane turned toward the Spanish islands.

Aoufa said the crew was involved in overpowering the hijacker. *AP*

RAMPAGE

An elephant destroys a minibus after throwing its rider and going on a rampage during Sri Lanka's sixth annual elephant polo tournament in Galle Feb. 15. Abey, a four-ton 18-year-old elephant, threw off his mahout and American rider and went on a rampage before being subdued.

REUTERS

Hamas resignations clear way for unity government

GAZA CITY—THE HAMAS-LED government resigned Thursday after 11 months of unprecedented Palestinian crisis, allowing the creation of a unity government that is intended to end deadly violence and a Western boycott.

The announcement followed talks between president Mahmud Abbas, who heads the moderate Fatah party, and prime minister Ismail Haniya, who led the Hamas-led government and who will stitch together a unity cabinet with Fatah.

"Today we started the procedure of forming a government of national union. Brother Ismail Haniya presented me with his government's resignation and I charged him with forming his new cabinet," Abbas told a news conference.

He expressed the hope that the new government would "inaugurate a new Palestinian era in which people live in peace and security."

"As head of the current government I submit my resignation to you in order to allow the start of constitutional steps to form a unity government," announce Haniya, standing shoulder to shoulder with Abbas.

The creation of the new unity cabinet seeks to end unprecedented political and economic crisis that has gripped the Palestinian territories ever since Haniya's Hamas-led government took office on March 28.

Israel and the West boycotted the government after Hamas took office following a stunning victory in January 2006 elections, owing to its refusal to recognize Israel, renounce violence or abide by past peace accords.

Haniya will now have five weeks to put together the new cabinet and get it approved by parliament, which is dominated by his radical Islamist movement—blacklisted as a terrorist organization by Israel and the West.

His government resigned a week after Abbas and Hamas supremo Khaled Meshaal signed a power-sharing agreement in Saudi Arabia on Feb. 8 in an effort to end deadly infighting and the crippling Western aid boycott.

Abbas read from a decree declaring that he had accepted the prime minister's resignation but asked the current government to take charge of business until the new government is able to take office.

"I call upon you as head of the next government to abide by the interests of the Palestinain people and to preserve their rights and accomplishments and work to achieve their national goals," Abbas said.

"I call upon you to respect Arab and international resolutions, and the agreements signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (which Hamas never formally joined)." He and his rival spoke after talks to smooth over last-minute obstacles to the new cabinet, which faces a daunting task to end Palestinian bloodshed that has left 100 people dead since December and woo back international aid.

Although Abbas and Haniya claim the agreement drawn up in the holy city of Mecca justifies an end to the sanctions, the accord makes no explicit reference to Israel or to respecting interim peace deals.

Instead observers say the letter Abbas gave to Haniya, urging him to "respect" PLO peace deals amounts to implicit recognition of Israel—an argument that Hamas as a party has denied. *AFP*

Putin promotes an ally, fuels talks over successor

MOSCOW—PRESIDENT VLADIMIR V. Putin on Thursday added intrigue to the unsettled but widely debated question of who might succeed him as Russia's leader in 2008 when he promoted his minister of defense in an unexpected Cabinet tinkering.

Sergei B. Ivanov, a former KGB officer who became the first civilian to head the country's military in 2001, will now serve as a first deputy prime minister, giving him expanded duties. He will have the same rank in government and title as another closely watched contender, Dmitri A. Medvedev.

The two men, who are friends and close aides from Putin's hometown, St. Petersburg, have emerged as the leading candidates to replace Putin when he completes a second and—by law—final term following presidential elections scheduled for March 2008.

The move, which went largely unexplained like most of Putin's actions, is certain to intensify speculation over which of the two might have the upper hand for Putin's endorsement. That would be a virtual guarantee of election, given his popularity and the centralized control of politics here.

Since Putin's last significant Cabinet reshuffling in November 2005, Medvedev had nominally been Ivanov's superior in the government. Medvedev also serves as chair of the Russian energy giant, Gazprom.

"I think it is the formulation of the two candidates for the presidency of the Russian Federation in 2008," said Sergei A. Markov, director of the Institute of Political Studies, who works closely with the Kremlin.

Ivanov's replacement as defense minister is Anatoly E. Serdyukov, a former Army officer and furniture manufacturer who has served as a tax inspector since Putin became president in 2000. Since July 2004, he has served as the head of the Federal Tax Service, an agency that has streamlined itself significantly but that remains a feared bureaucracy, one that critics say has been used selectively to punish opponents.

At a news conference this month, Putin faced repeated questions about his successor, but refused to answer them directly.

"Everyone who should be is already working in his proper place," he said, apparently not hinting at the shuffle announced Thursday. "And what we should do is not to make a fuss about future elections but, as I have said, provide the citizens with an opportunity to make a free and democratic choice." *NYT*

LOOK AGAIN, THAT'S MARS

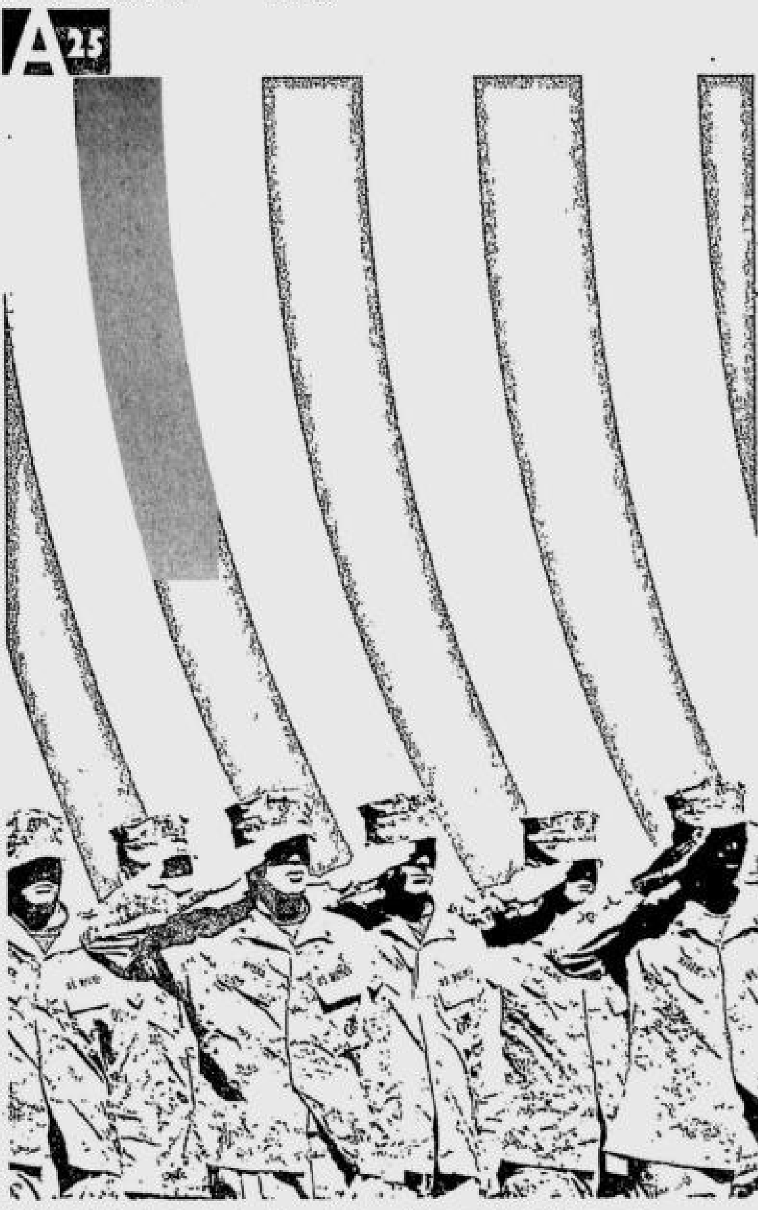
This image shows a valley on Mars as photographed by the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment camera on board Nasa's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. AP

UN force's stay in Haiti extended

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously agreed to extend for eight months the mandate of UN peacekeepers in Haiti and directed them to crack down harder on criminal armed gangs preying on slum-dwellers.

The 15-member council passed a Peruvian-drafted resolution that extended the mandate of the 9,200-strong UN stabilization force in Haiti (MINUSTAH)—which expires Thursday—until Oct. 15 "with the intention to renew for further periods." The agreement resulted from a compromise between the one-year extension initially suggested by Peru and a group 25 donor countries, including the United States, Canada, Brazil, Britain and France, and the six months pushed by China, which does not have diplomatic ties with Port-au-Prince. *AFP*

US not looking for excuse to wage war with Iran–Gates



MARINES salute during the playing of Taps as the Marines of Regimental Combat Team 5 memorialize 100 Marines, soldiers, and sailors who died during the regiment's 12-month deployment in the Al-Anbar province of Iraq on Feb. 15 at Camp Pendleton, California. AFP

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED STATES IS NOT looking for an excuse to go to war with Iran, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Thursday, seeking to dispel suspicions aroused by US charges of Iranian meddling in Iraq.

Gates said US assertions that the Qods Force, an elite branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, is training Iraqi extremists and supplying them with armor piercing bombs and other weapons are based on "hard fact."

But he said, "For the *umpteenth* time, we are not looking for an excuse to go to war with Iran. We are not planning a war with Iran."

"What we are trying to do is inside Iraq disrupt the networks that put these weapons in the hands of those who kill our troops. That's it," he said.

Questions about the US evidence arose after a US military briefing in Baghdad in which an anonymous official said that support for attacks on US forces had been sanctioned at the "highest levels" of the Iranian regime.

Since then senior administration officials, from President George W. Bush on down, have backed away from the claim while trying to allay suspicions that it was using unverified intelligence to prepare the ground for a strike on Iran.

"We're sensitive to that skepticism," said Gates.

"And it's one of the reasons why we were so concerned that the briefing on these materiels be factual and be able to be substantiated by evidence, so it wasn't hypothesis, it wasn't assumption, it wasn't assessment," he said.

Gates said he assumed that Iranian Revolutionary Guards leaders knew of the activities but did not know how high in the Iranian leadership knowledge of what the Qods Force was doing in Iraq went.

"And, frankly, for me, either way it's a worry. Either they do know and have approved it, or they don't know, and the IRGC may be acting on their own in Iraq," Gates said.

General Peter Pace, the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the first to raise doubts about the allegation that Iranian leaders were involved, telling reporters the role of the Iranian leadership was unclear.

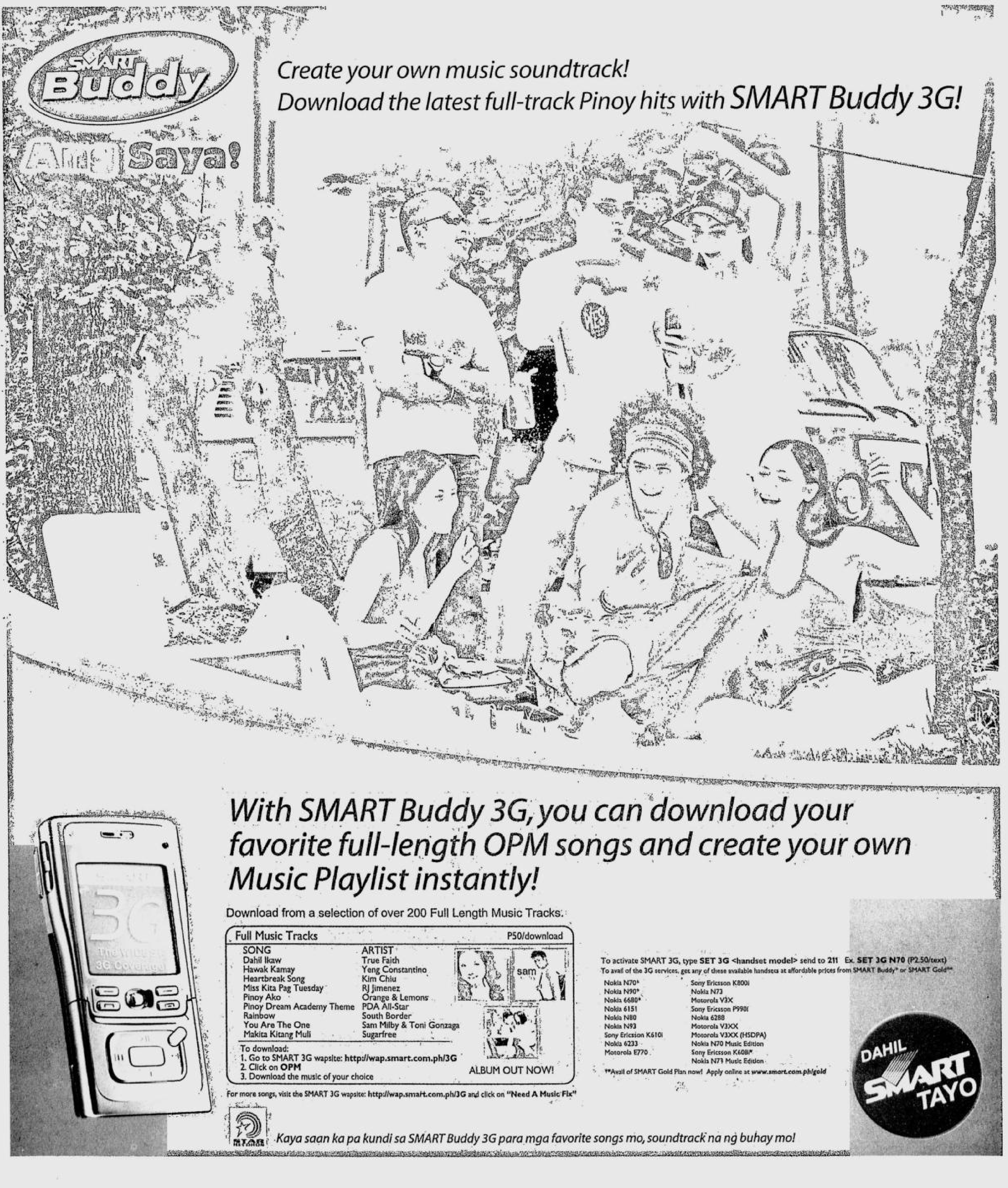
Pace joined Gates at a press conference at the Pentagon and was asked to explain.

"I think it's very important to be extremely precise when we're talking about what we know are facts and then what conclusions or assessments we make based on those facts," he said.

"We do not have proof that the senior leadership in Iran is directing these activities in Iraq," he said.

Bush on Wednesday said suggestions that the United States was manufacturing the allegations against Iran were "preposterous." There was no doubt that the elite Al-Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps was behind powerful, new improvised explosive devices (IEDS) killing US soldiers in Iraq, Bush said, vowing he would "do something about it."

AFP



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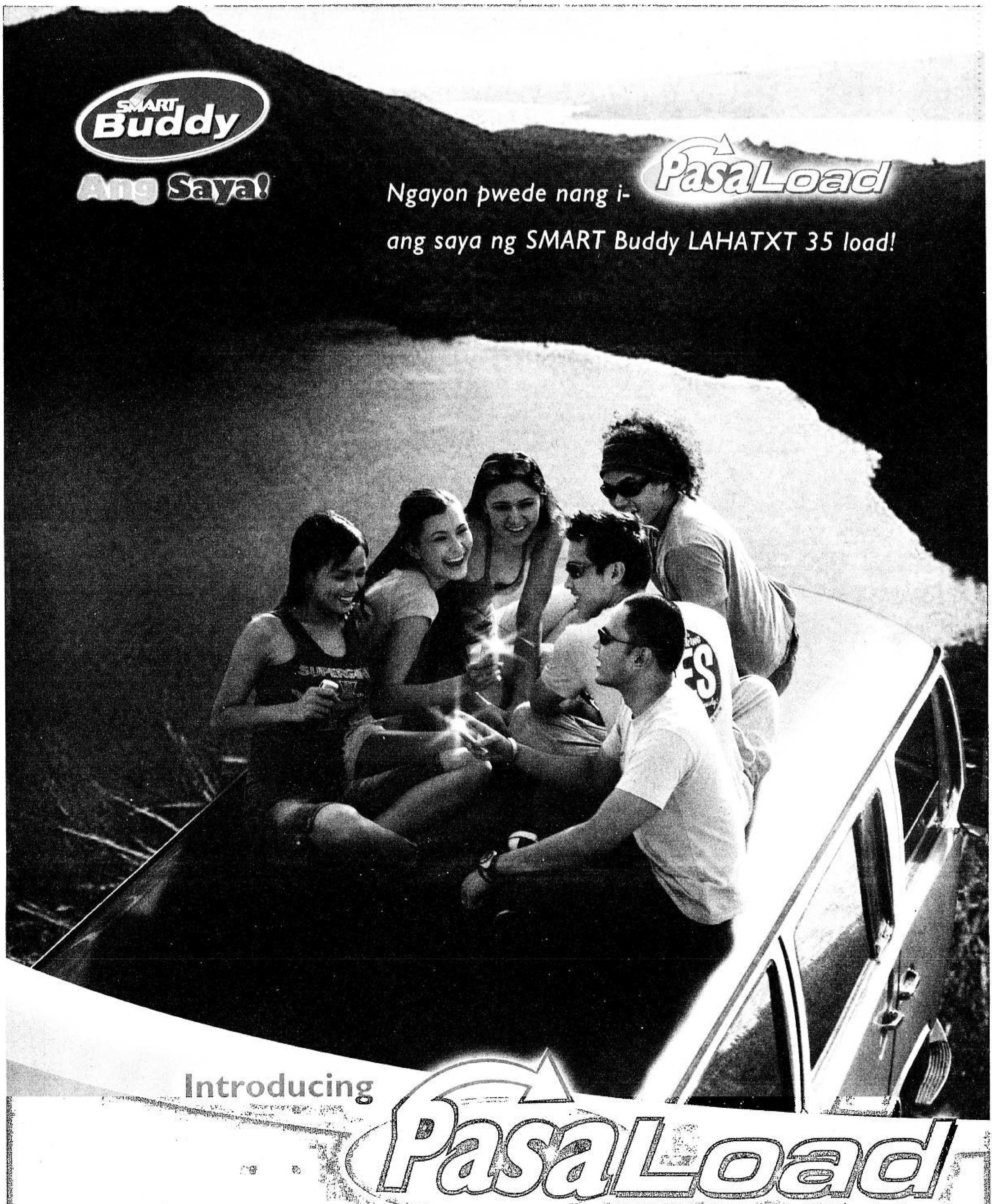
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WHAT'S INSIDE

Holyfield, Hopkins still going at it /A31

SPORTS

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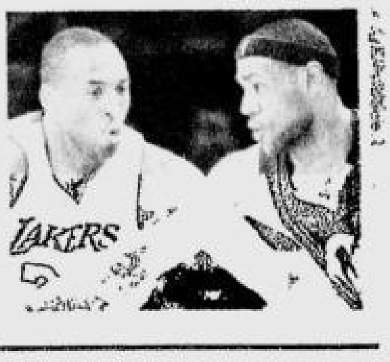
Mavs notch 9th straight victory /A31



Canlubang confident of repeat

Eagle Ridge, Team LA shine as PAL Interclub Seniors event goes full blast

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

CAGAYAN DE ORO—LUISITA MAY HAVE AN ace up its sleeve but Canlubang prides itself with having the deeper and balanced lineup when it starts defense of its Seniors crown today in the 60th Philippine Airlines Interclub tournament here.

While Canlubang star Tommy Manotoc acknowledges the superb credentials of Lusita's American recruit, Tom Culligan, he said the Laguna-based squad remains unperturbed in its quest for a second straight crown.

"They (Luisita squad) have a good first five but that's about it," said Manotoc, whose vintage form has been unmatched since he joined the 55-and-above division four years ago.

"Our advantage is that we have the better backup players if some of our mainstays fail to deliver."

Culligan, a four-time Northern California seniors champion and former Philippine Open low amateur, is expected to provide extra clout for the Luisita team bannered by veterans Iggy Clavecilla, Francis Gaston, Richie Gaston and King Sumulong. Completing the lineup are Peregrine de Guzman, Freddie Mendoza and Cesar Munoz.

Aside from Manotoc, Canlubang counts on Rollie Viray, Luigi Yulo, Bing Bunye, Tony Olives, Lino Magpantay, Florencio Adriano and Darly Patalot.

All eight players see action today at the old, tree-lined Del Monte course in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, before playing their second round at the modern Pueblo de Oro course here tomorrow. The top five scores for each day counts.

The first round of the Founders division also gets going today at Del Monte with Wack Wack, led by Commission on Elections chair Ben Abalos, bidding to retain the title.

Meanwhile, Eagle Ridge and Team LA shared the lead with 217 points in the first round of the Sportswriters division. Baguio Country Club also had 217 but was relegated to third at 215 when Rep. Mauricio Domogan was penalized for signing the wrong scorecard.

Lanang showed the way in the Friendship division with 220 followed by Aguinaldo (214) and PGA British Colombia (206).

Manotoc said the two-way fight for top honors will depend on which team adapts better to the contrasting conditions in the two host courses. With action set from the white tees, he said the players with the sharper short game have the edge.

Olives, the Canlubang Seniors team captain, said the plan is to grab the lead right away in the comparatively tougher Del Monte layout since the players will be more or less on even terms at Pueblo because its conditions are similar to many courses in Metro Manila.

Canlubang opened its bid for a first title last year by taking a 20-point lead before coasting to victory when Luisita, which holds the record for most senior wins in 19 years of the event, was disqualified for fielding an ineligible player.

Manotoc and Co. will actually try to pave the way for a second straight championship double with Canlubang's regular men's squad heavily favored to prevail next week.

Action Asia, Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier, Callaway Golf, 105.1 Crossover, GE Aviation, Gecas, Mizuno, People Asia and Royal Caribbean are the major sponsors.

Inquirer.net, Business Mirror, Fortune Tobacco, GMA-7, Premier Wine and Spirits and Radio Mindanao Net, whose local stations DXCC is celebrating its 55th year are the corporate sponsors.

The other backers are Century Park Hotel, C-Lium Fibre, Foreign Post, Lufthansa Technik Phils. and What's On & Expat Communications.

The first-round results:

SPORTSWRITERS: 217—Eagle Ridge, Team LA; 215—Baguio CC; 212—Pacay Golf; 208—Del Monte, Apo; 204—Veterans; 203—Alta Vista; 192—Sienna Plantation, Iloilo Golf, Hawaii Fil-Am; 191—Lumbia; 188—Maharlika; 175—Davao City; 173—Greater Chicago; 169—SFO Alliance; 156—Fil-Oz Sydney; 153—Guam Seniors; 152—Pittsburg Fil-Am; 150—Guinhalaran; 149—Australasian, Travelers; 133—Zamboanga 133.

FRIENDSHIP: 220—Lanang; 214—Aguinaldo; 206—PGA British Columbia; 201—Iligan; 197—Victorias; 187—Club Intramuros, SFO Heritage; 186—Brotherhood; 181—Club Filipino; 180—Moffet Field; 176—Fil-Am SFO; 175—Fil-Am Florida; 172—Saranggani, Brookside; 171—MSU, Ang Tay; 167—Mount Malindang, San Juanico; 166—IAGC SD; 164—EZ Par, 157—Bonifacio; 154—Mercedes, 139—Skywest.

OUT OF TROUBLE: Quiricio Magbojos of IAGC-San Diego blasts out of the bunker guarding the ninth green of the Del Monte course in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. Magbojos' squad managed a 164, a huge 56 points off leader Lanang in the Friendship division. INQUIRER PHOTO / JESS YUSON

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Hapee raring to stop Harbour /A28

2 names up for executive director /A29

Subic hosts rich chessfest /A30

3 NSAs intensify hunt for talents /A32

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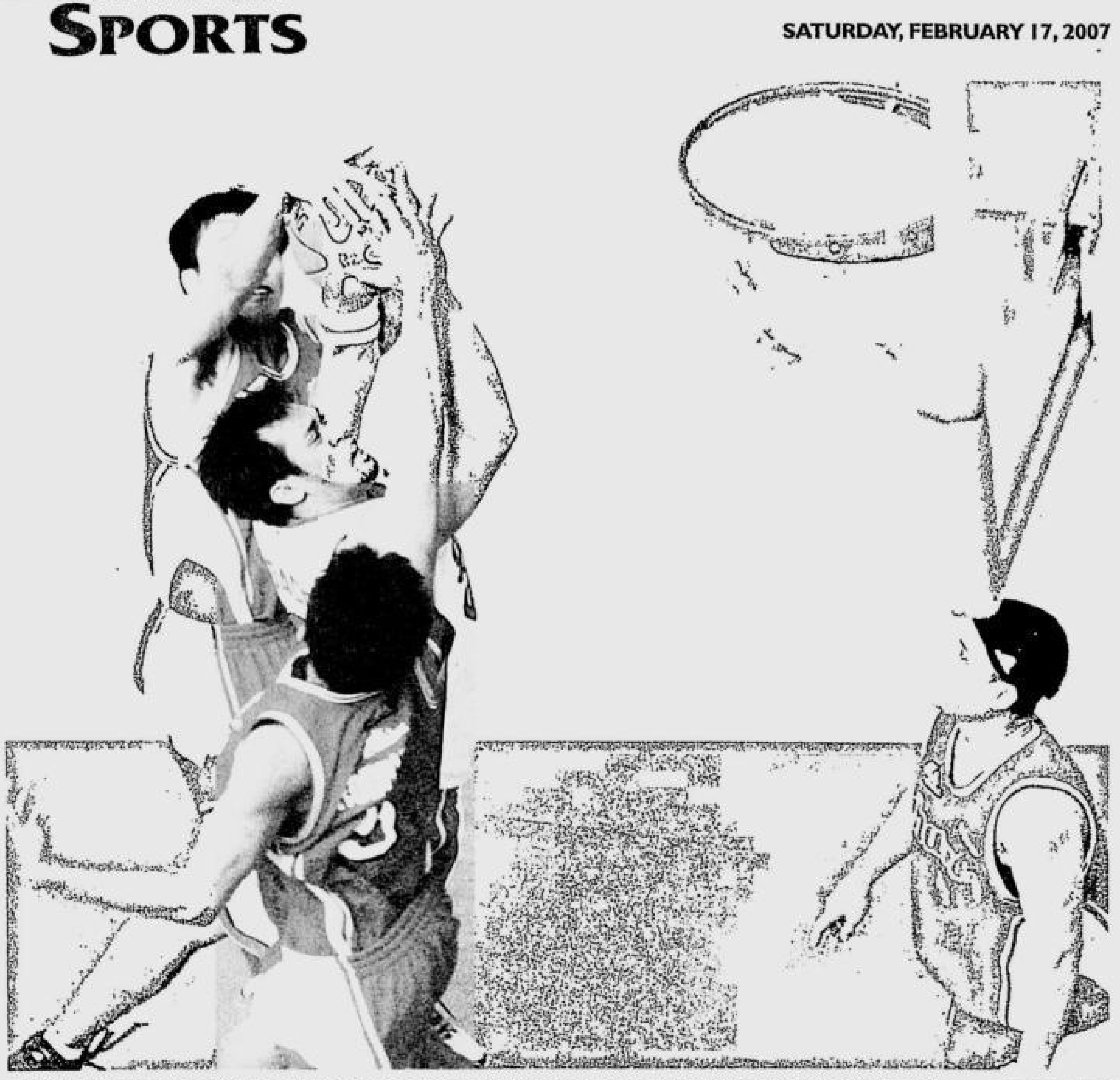


HAPEE-PCU's Larry Rodriguez and Ardy Larong smother a followup by Harbour Centre's Jerwin Gaco in Game 2. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO.

A 2-0 CUSHION IS NO GUARANTEE, AND HARBOUR CENTRE NEED NOT LOOK far from the pages of PBL history to confirm this.

Just the same, coach Jorge Gallent is solidly hopeful the Port Masters would be able to sweep Hapee-PCU in Game 3 of the PBL Silver Cup Finals today.

"We want to finish it in Game 3, we don't want Hapee to come back," Gallent exclaimed.

GAME TODAY
(*The Arena San Juan*)
2:30 pm—Achievement Awards
3:15 p.m.—Hapee-PCU vs Harbour Centre (Game 3-Finals)
(Harbour Centre leads series, 2-0)

The Port Masters, triumphant in the first two matches of the best-of-5 titular series, go for their second straight championship at 3:15 p.m. today at The Arena in San Juan, Metro Manila.

They have the momentum, but the Port Masters are hounded by last year's Heroes Cup Finals series, where Magnolia, down 0-2, rose, from the grave to beat Rain or Shine for the championship.

Hapee-PCU coach Jun Noel believes his wards—led by MVP candidate Jason Castro—have the talent and spirit to pull off a similar feat.

"It's not yet over, [the Port Masters] have to win three games to win the series," said Noel.

Moreover, a PBL championship clean-up has yet to be re-established since the formidable crew of Romel Adducul, Eddie Laure and Ronald Tubid powered Welcoat Paints to a sweep of the 2002 Challenge Cup.

Castro may even get some pre-game inspiration during the 2:30 p.m. Achievement Awards where he and Toyota Otis' Marvin Cruz are the heavy favorites for the top individual plum.

But the Port Masters have found their own hero in Chico Lanete, the veteran guard leading their scoring charge since the semifinal round.

"If Chico plays well, everybody in the team just plays well," said Gallent, who had steered the Port Masters to four straight wins, including their last two games in the semifinal series versus Toyota Otis.

Last Thursday, the Port Masters clawed their way back from a 20-point deficit with Lanete drilling in 20 markers, including the game-clinching triple in the final minute of Game 2.

Seasoned guard Al Vergara also came to the rescue for the Port Masters as he shot seven of his nine points in the last two minutes.

Last Tuesday, Lanete also stepped up at crunch time to finish with 14 points in the Port Masters' Game 1 victory, 84-80.

What more, Lanete has ably filled in for struggling star JC Intal, who's averaging only 5.5 points while shooting only 17 percent from the field.

The Port Masters have also been drawing inspired performances from second-stringers Jerwin Gaco, Ryan Araña, Edwin Asoro and Jonathan Fernandez since the semifinal series.

Hapee-PCU, though will try to brush off its recent meltdown with Castro and the reliable cast of Larry Rodriguez, Mark Boroboran, Philip Butel and Ronald Bucao.

In Game 2, Castro topscored with 16 points, while Rodriguez added 10 before sitting out the last five minutes due to a sprained ankle. *Jasmine W. Payo*

FULL ASSISTANCE

PBA okays release of RP cagers

By June Navarro

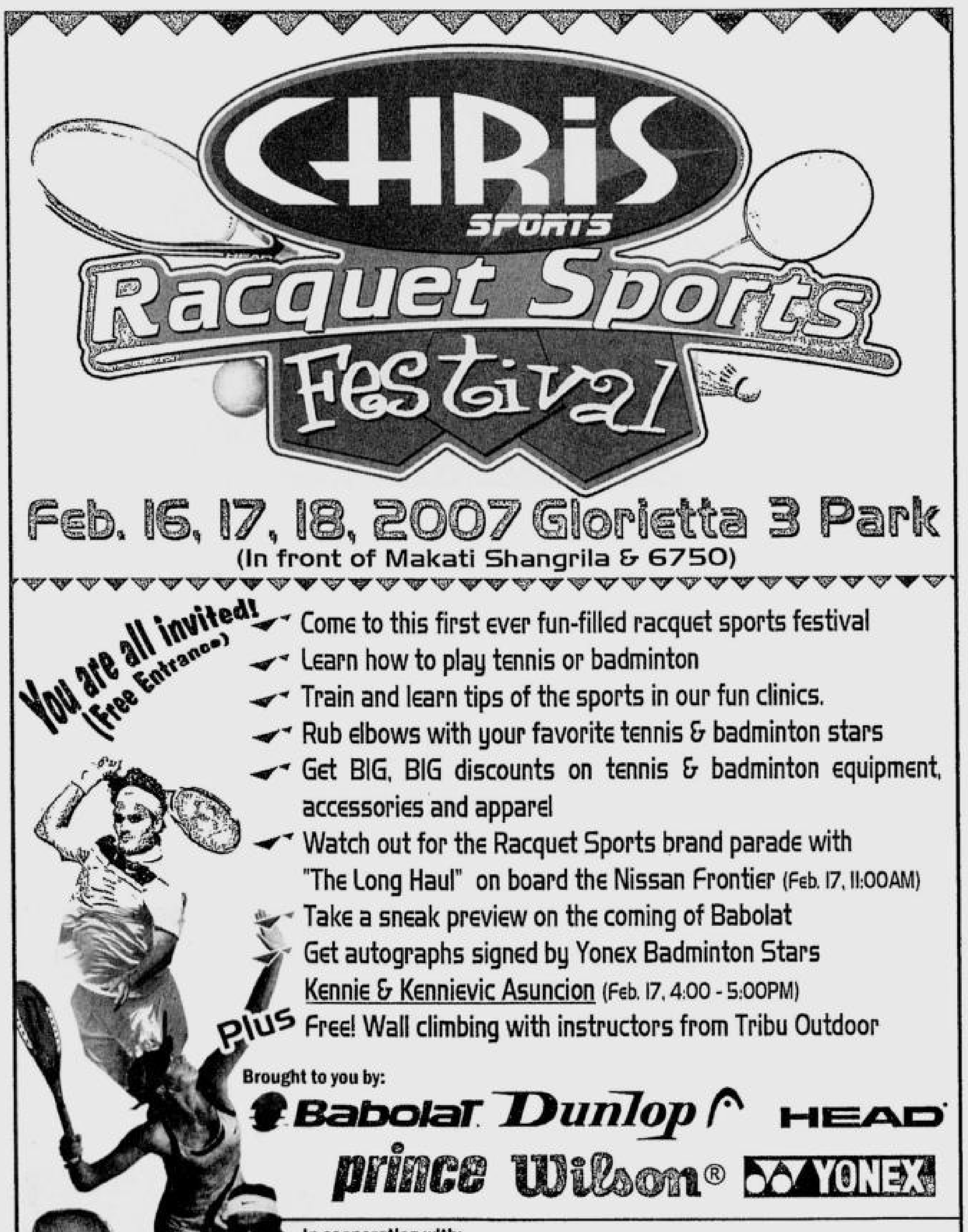
THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) yesterday agreed to provide full assistance to the national team and to lend players for RP squads seeing action in coming international tournaments.

In a resolution, the board, chaired by Talk 'N Text's Ricky Vargas, said national players who will be picked from the PBA's 10 teams will be made available for the Philippine teams to be sent to the Southeast Asian Basketball Association (Seaba) championship and the Fiba-Asia tournament.

The resolution allows the PBA to pull out players from their respective mother clubs—even during the import-flavored conference that starts next month—for national duty.

The Seaba championship is set in May in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with the winner earning the right to represent the region in the Fiba-Asia tournament slated in August in Saitama, Japan.

The FIBA-Asia offers two berths for next year's Beijing Olympics.



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Eagles champion squad nears pro league reunion

By June Navarro

INTAL

ESCALONA

ATENEO STALWARTS JC INTAL, DOUG Kramer and Macky Escalona know for sure that they will be joining this year's Philippine Basketball Association draft.

What they do not know is that once they get drafted, they will achieve a milestone of sorts for their alma mater, one that only one other collegiate team has accomplished.

Intal, Kramer and Escalona were remnants of the 2002 UAAP basketball varsity champion squad, whose core group and stringers are now making waves in the pro league.

"I'm very excited to finally have the chance to join the professional league. It's been a long-time dream since I started playing the game," said the 6-foot-4 Kramer.

Red Bull's Enrico Villanueva, Larry Fonacier, Rich Alvarez, Paolo Bugia and Magnum Membrere, along with rookie playmaker Lewis Alfred Tenorio and Wesley Gonzales of San Miguel, formed part of that Ateneo UAAP crown.

The inclusion of Intal, Kramer and Escalona next season will almost duplicate the feat of the San Sebastian College NCAA champion squad in the late 80s where all members of the team played in the PBA.

"To play in the PBA is the opportunity I've been waiting for," said Intal, a 6-foot-4 slasher with an accurate touch from the outside.

Missing in the 2002 Ateneo lineup of PBA players and aspirants are stringers Sonny Tadeo and Badjie Del Rosario, who decided to enter the corporate world instead of trying their luck in the pro league.

Ex-pros Eugene Quilban, Paul Alvarez, Art Dela Cruz, Chris Bade, Nap Haton, Allan Garrido, Django Rivera, Nani Demigillo, Allan Delos Reyes, Melchor Teves, Egay Macaraya, Bong Solomon and Eton Navarro were part of the 1989 NCAA champion Stags.

It marked the first time that a collegiate quintet had successfully fielded all of its players in the professional ranks.

But while the 1989 Stags made a living in the pro league, the 2002 Ateneo squad will bank on their diplomas once their PBA days are over.

"I am confident that when their legs start to get weak, they will be ready to move to a new career aside from basketball because of their diplomas," said Ateneo manager Arben Santos.

UST, UP batters on collision course

THE ALUMNI SOFTBALL TEAMS OF THE University of Santo Tomas and University of the Philippines are looking to dominate the championship round of the 4th Alumni Slo-Pitch Softball League (ASSL) Tournament this Sunday at the Rosario Sports Complex in Pasig City.

Both teams are tied at the top with identical 4-1 win-loss cards, with UST vying for their second straight ASSL title.

Both teams, however, will have to wait for the results of the playoffs, where La Salle, Ateneo, National University and FEU-UE will battle it out for the last two slots.

SPORTSWATCH

Tangkad Sagad-Davao on

DAVAO—TWENTY SCHOOLS ARE COMPETING in the 2007 Cherifer Tangkad Sagad Basketball Tournament which comes off the wraps today at Ateneo de Davao gym. A squad from the Ateneo grade school heads the favorites in the InterMed Marketing Philippines-sponsored event supported by Holy Child School, Assumption College, Magallanes Elementary School, Piedad Central ES and Emar Learning Center and Adidas. The five-on-five tournament, open to boys 12 years old or younger, is part of a nationwide basketball development which is celebrating its second year. The kick-off stage in Metro Manila saw Don Bosco-Makati, beat Don Bosco-Mandaluyong in a shoot-out for the title, 26-24. The event was conceptualized by Cherifer product manager Tom Meneses in consultation with tournament director Edmundo "Ato" Badolato of San Beda and organizer Bernard Ocampo. The teams will divided into four groups with the top two after the single round advancing to the next round.

Las Pinas 3-cocker today

THIRTY-FIVE COCKERS AND DERBY REGULARS collide tonight in a special 3-cock derby at the Las Piñas Coliseum with 51 fights on tap beginning at 7. Last Saturday's champions, Paul Olegario and Baldo Perez, lead a tough list of participants from Cavite, Laguna and Metro Manila who will dispute the cash prize of P200,000. Enjie Almas of Las Pinas will host the event. Official entries, with weight limits of 1.8 kg to 2.4 kg only, must be submitted at LPC office, today, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. LPC's crowd -drawer, the Sunday Hackfight Concierto unfolds tomorrow beginning at 8 a.m. A total of 127 fights were held last Sunday, according to coliseum manager Alex Tobias. Tobias also announced that each winner (first 20 fights) will receive a bonus of P1,000.

Largahan entries swell

THE NUMBER OF CONFIRMED ENTRIES CONtinue to build up for Roligon Mega Cockpit's Largahan 5-cock derby, slated on Feb. 22, 24, 26 and 28. More than 200 entries with cockhouse reservations were listed as of yesterday, assuring another tough battle at the 15,000-seat venue next week. For an entry fee of P4,400, participants can take a shot at the guaranteed prize of P2 million, said host Rolly Ligon. As bonus, the fastest win champion will drive home a brand new seven-seater Toyota Avanza 1.5. Last December, Roland Galvez of Bacolod won a Toyota Avanza in Roligon's Apordabol cockfest. Reservation of cockhouses isl ongoing.

Nat'l bowling team elims start Feb. 21

THE PHILIPPINE BOWLING CONgress will hold the 2007 national team eliminations for the World Women's Championships in Monterrey, Mexico, the Asian Indoor Games in Macau and the South East Asian Games in Thailand starting on Feb. 21.

The elimination is open to all PBC members in good standing and with endorsements from their respective associations.

There will be six playing schedules with aspirants playing 12 games per playing schedule. They must complete the six playing dates.

Schedules are as follows: Feb. 21 (Sta. Lucia East Bowling Center, Cainta); Feb. 22 (PowerBowl, Powerplant Mall, Makati City); Feb. 23 (Pearl Bowling Center, Parañaque City); Feb. 24 (Green Valley Country Club, Pasig City); Feb. 25 Playdium Bowling Center, Araneta Ave., QC; Feb. 26 (Bowling Inn, Taft Ave. , Manila).

Registration is now being accepted at the PBC Office. Deadline of registration is on Feb. 21 at 5 p.m. at Sta. Lucia East Bowling Center, Cainta. Latecomers will not be entertained.

On the succeeding playing dates, a latecomer will not be credited any score on frames or games he/she misses. His/her score starts on the frame where he/she is ready to bowl.

The top 12 male and top 8 female based on total score will compose Team Philippines. If there will be a tie for the last position after the scheduled eliminations, the party involved will bowl a two-game series to break the tie.

Different lane conditions will be used for every tournament date. Entry fee is P7,500.

There will be a briefing for prospective aspirants on Feb. 21 at 5 p.m. at the Sta. Lucia East Bowling Center, Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall, Cainta. *Roy Luarca*

2 names up for cage body exec director

By June Navarro

ASSURED OF THE RECOGNITION BY THE Fiba (International Basketball Federation), the BAP-Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas has shifted its focus on the selection of its executive director.

BAP-SBP president Manny V. Pangilinan yesterday said the board would ask membership chairman Ely Capacio to assemble his committee and begin the task of selecting the possible candidates for the vital post.

"The search for the executive director will be handled as a board matter," said Pangilinan after the BAP-SBP secured yesterday the accreditation it needed from the Philippine Olympic Committee.

"We will ask Ely (Capacio) to convene the committee and start the search process immediately," Pangilinan added.

CAPISTRANO

Capacio, a member of the 25-man board of trustees representing the professional sector, will be tasked to come up with a short list of aspirants for the post and recommend it to the board for approval.

There are no official candidates yet but a couple of names have already cropped up on who will carry out the day-to-day operations of the new organization.

Sources said BAP-SBP director Junjun Capistrano and lawyer Chito Salud, son of former PBA commissioner Rudy Salud, are being considered for the post.

The POC general assembly unanimously gave its nod yesterday to the BAP-SBP, the final step before the Fiba lifts the suspension on the country.

Pangilinan has tasked BAP-SBP secretary Marievic Anonuevo to immediately transmit the POC accreditation to the Fiba headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The telecommunication mogul said he expects a positive response from Fiba secretary general Patrick Baumann.

"I believe the Fiba should be able to lift the suspension. But of course, I cannot speak for him (Baumann). *Iyon ang usapan di ba?*" said Pangilinan. "He did say, however, that it's just a matter of days after sending the POC accreditation along with the other documents of the BAP-SBP."

Based on the resolution, the BAP-SBP was admitted as a regular member of the POC but its status is subject to some of the conditions set by the Olympic body.

The BAP-SBP should obtain membership with the Fiba and comply with its articles of incorporation and bylaws filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Hey, please help Prisoner No. 1953532

By Dennis U. Eroa
Libre sports editor

FORMER PBA STAR RUDY DISTRITO has lost his name.

He has been shackled indefinitely and reduced to a dark statistic.

Of course, you could still correspond with the hero in one of Barangay Ginebra's epic championship victories.

He could be addressed as Prisoner No.1953532.

Distrito, 48, calls home the detention center at 330 S. Casino Center Boulevard in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Former Barangay Ginebra coach Rino Salazar and wife Rose sent an e-mail to the INQUIRER stating Distrito's fate is in the hands of Judge David Hall.

He will be sentenced on March 16 after pleading guilty to manslaughter of El Salvadoran Juan Amaya, who was stabbed to death following a fight on November 2004.

The Salazars, who have migrated to Alaska, got much of the information from a Distrito supporter named Edwin Vergel de Dios Santos.

Helping Distrito

In an exclusive interview, De Dios Santos said he has been helping Distrito since Day One.

"Rudy defended himself during the fight," said De Dios Santos, who works as a physical therapist in Texas. "Remember that Amaya's half his age. I will not stop helping Rudy."

Another Distrito friend, Elmer Yanga, the former senior vice-president for corporate relations and longtime PBA team manager of RFM, bared that the Salazars might go to Las Vegas for the sentencing.

De Dios Santos stressed the importance of sending letters supporting Distrito.

But lawyer Dan Silverstein said it would help to first send the letters to him.

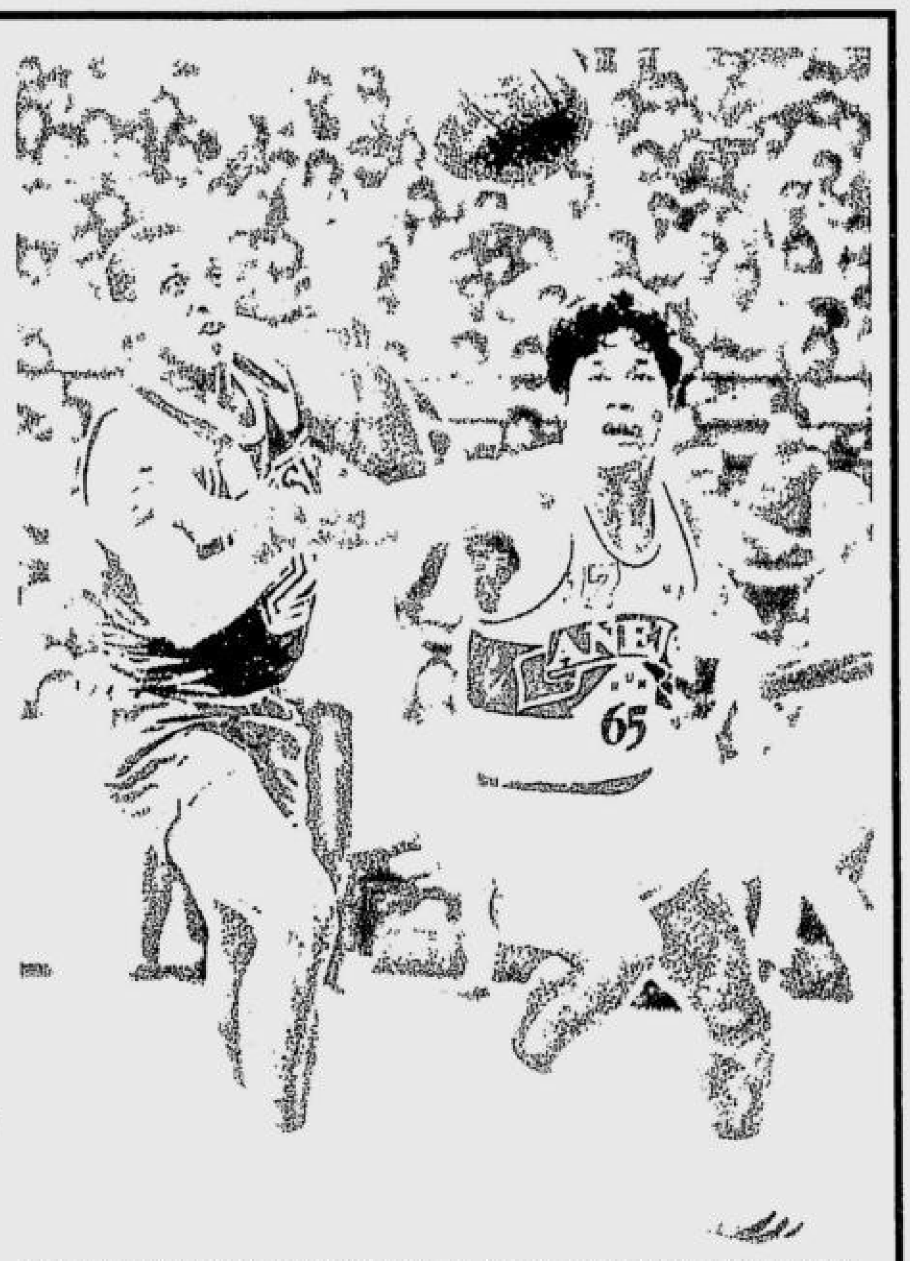
"Please address the letter/s to Judge David Wall, but send them to me so I could review them before forwarding them to the judge," said Silverstein in his e-mail. "My address is 309 S. 3rd St., Room 226, Las Vegas, NV 89155. You could also send the letters directly to the detention center, 330 S. Casino Center Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89101. You'll also need to put Rudy's inmate number on the letter."

Favorable impact

De Dios Santos said he is certain the letters will have a favorable impact come the sentencing.

Yanga said letters of support have already been sent to Distrito, who carved a name for himself in the PBA by playing as a take-charge guard for the fabled Crispa Redmanizers.

Broadcaster Ronnie Nathanielsz is also spearheading a drive to help the jailed cager.


RUDY Distrito (right) of Añejo fights for possession with Alaska import Seam Chambers in this PDI file photo.

"If Rudy doesn't get probation, the manslaughter charge carries a term of between two and 20 years," explained Silverstein. "What this means is that the judge can sentence him to as little as a two- to five-year sentence, a maximum of an eight- to 20-year sentence, or anything in between.

Maximum time

"The maximum time Distrito faces is eight to 20 years, which would make him eligible for parole after eight years."

Silverstein believes his client will not get the maximum penalty for manslaughter.

Distrito can get four to 10 years and will be eligible for parole in 2009 since he had already spent two years behind bars, the lawyer said.

Juvic hurts shoulder, pulls out of TCC Invt'l

By Musong R. Castillo

PAGUNSAN

AFTER GRINDING IT out in the Asian Tour since the start of the year, a fatigued and hurting Juvic Pagunsan has opted to forego defense of his title in The Country Club Invitational set to tee off next week.

The 28-year-old Asian Tour Rookie of the Year withdrew yesterday from the richest local tournament outside of the Philippine Open, complaining of a shoulder injury sustained after four straight weeks on the Tour.

This has left the fight for the P1.3 million top purse wide open with Frankie Miñoza, whom Pagunsan nipped in a playoff last year, also begging off from the 72-hole event at the windswept The Country Club course in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Pagunsan has already vied in the Sony Open in Hawaii, the Qatar Masters, the Philippine Open and the Malaysian Open in Kuala Lumpur.

Miñoza, meanwhile, had told reporters after winning a second RP Open crown earlier in the month that he would likely skip the TCC event.

Without Pagunsan, the only former champions left in the elite local field are Antonio Lascuña, Jherome Delariarte and Cassius Casas. The other notables are Angelo Que, the in-form RP Open runnerup Gerald Rosales and 1990 RP Open winner Robert Pactolerin.

Junior World champions Dottie Ardina and Cyna Rodriguez along with Mia Piccio, Crystal Superal and Anya Tanpinco, members of the national pool training under the ICTSI golf program, are also seeing action in the event as part of their buildup for tournaments abroad.

A race to ... an ailing river...
RNATIONAL
RIV

RACING TO SAVE THE RIVER: Organizers of the Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River, led by Clean & Green Foundation chair and former First Lady Amelita Ramos and PMPR and GAB chair Eric Buhain (fifth and seventh from left, front row) get together with officers of civic and student groups and running clubs at the launch of this year's edition of the 42K race slated Feb. 25. The marathon, which will be fired off at Fort Santiago and end at the Global City in Taguig, and its side events are expected to lure about 9,000 runners. The PMPR, co-chaired by Tisha Abundo, is an annual advocacy run for the rehabilitation of the Pasig River.

4,000 set to answer starting gun in Milo Marathon Malolos elims

FOR ONLY THE SECOND TIME IN 31 YEARS, the annual Milo Marathon will hold an elimination race in Malolos City this Sunday.

More than 4,000 runners are expected to vie for the top three places—and automatic berths in the 42K national grand finals on Nov. 18 in Metro Manila—in the premier 21K race, as well as in the 5K and 3K side events.

The top three finishers in the 21K run in both the men's and women's divisions will also win cash prizes and trophies.

Bulacan Gov. Josefina M. De la Cruz has been invited to fire the starting gun flagging off the 21K runners. She will be joined by provincial board member Jon Jon Mendoza and Malolos Mayor Danilo Domingo.

The country's biggest and longest-running foot race offers about P159,000 in cash prizes, as well as medals to the top 10 finishers in all races.

The 31st Milo Marathon will have 24 legs for the 2007 season.

Milo Sports Events executive Pat Goc-ong is advising all runners to be at the starting area not later than 5 a.m. for pre-race briefings. Overall race director Rudy Biscocho, meanwhile, said participants must wear the Milo T-shirts given to them upon registration for security purposes.

Assisting organizers in this Sunday's races are the Provincial Youth Sports Employment Art and Culture Office headed by Elizabeth Alonzo, assisted by sports development officer 4 Anthony "Toti" Villanueva, police provincial director Supt. Jesus Gatchalian, the office of the Mayor of Malolos and Calumpit, Spectrum Communications, Philippine National Red Cross-Bulacan Chapter, and the Department of Education Medical team.

No problem motivating Archers, says deputy coach

By Marlon Alexander Luistro
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LIPA CITY—AFTER MISSING THE ENTIRE UAAP season last year due to a league-mandated suspension, the De La Salle University Green Archers coaching staff knows that it has at least one problem less to worry about.

"The team doesn't need much motivation," said assistant coach Tyrone Bautista. "The suspension is enough motivation for the team to prove something."

The Archers' team B squad and Bautista were here yesterday to play an exhibition match against the De La Salle-Lipa Chevrons, who beat their Manila-based counterparts, 82-78, at the De La Salle-Lipa Centrum.

On April 21 last year, the UAAP board unanimously voted to suspend La Salle from participating in all UAAP events for the 2006-2007 season for fielding ineligible players.

The school admitted that players Tim Gatchalian and Mark Benitez, who suited up for the team from 2003-2005, submitted fake papers to enroll in La Salle.

The UAAP board forfeited La Salle's finishes in those three years, including the championship trophy in 2004, which it awarded to Far Eastern University, the runner-up that year.

"The boys are eager and excited to play," said Bautista. "They really miss the crowd, excitement and the thrill the UAAP brings. Of course, we might experience some rust at the start but we'll just play our game."

The Archers have already bagged titles at the 2006 Fil-Oil and Flying V Homegrown Cup participated in by UAAP and NCAA teams and an invitational tournament in Bahrain, where they were pitted against commercial ball clubs.

"Our primary goal is to win the UAAP championship," Bautista said. "We would not be exchanging all other trophies with that."

Aside from defending champion Santo Tomas Growling Tigers, Bautista counted the University of the East Red Warriors, the Ateneo Blue Eagles and the Adamson Falcons, who made last year's Final Four, as the teams to beat next season.

The team, Bautista said, will rely on veterans Rico Maierhoffer, Jayvee Casio and Cholo Villanueva to lead the Archers. He named guard Fil-Bahrain Badir Malabes as among the rookies to watch for.

Bautista described the 6-foot-1 off-guard as a scorer who could provide the Archers reliable offense from behind the arc.

"We already have a formidable and confident squad," said Bautista. "Reaching the final four [will be] already an achievement, for the team."

Getting in the line of fire with combat games

By June Navarro

AT FIRST GLANCE, IT IS EASY TO MIStake these uniformed gun-toting men for real merchants of war.

Like soldiers, they wear battle gears, carry guns that look like the real thing and the tactics they employ are similar to that applied in the battlefield.

It wouldn't be a surprise that if you run into these war movie fanatics, your intuition will have you ducking for cover.

Once you actually get caught in the crossfire and get struck by a stray bullet, though, that's the only time you'll realize that this is just a game—one that comes closest to an actual war.

Since its inception in 1985, airsoft gun war games have enticed over a thousand followers into trooping to different fields of combat across the country and play their favorite pastime every weekend.

And Oliver Yap, an airsoft war games die-hard for the past five years, has witnessed the growth of the sport usually played in a bushy two-hectare lot during field games or in a spacious but obstacle-filled enclosed area during closed quarter games.

"One would think that this is just an ordinary game with less activity, but it's not," said Yap, whose team, Storm Troopers Airsoft Group (Stag), is a member of the Philippine National Airsoft Society.

"Every time we go into the battlefield, we find our bodies aching the next day," added the 32-year-old Yap.

Every stage presents a different mission that a team should accomplish. Each team fields at least seven players for every phase and the adventure will force two opposing teams to achieve a specific target.

Among the events usually played are capture the flag, rescue the hostage, defend the fort, accuracy and skirmish.

Accuracy tests each team member in a target-shooting contest while skirmish involves two teams going after each other like two opposing sides in a war.

Each stage requires teams to achieve the mission in at least 12 to 15 minutes.

DRESSED in full combat gear, airsoft enthusiasts can easily be mistaken for real soldiers.

Because airsoft bullets do not leave marks the way paintball (the one used in the reality show Combat Mission) does, honesty play a big role in combat games.

"That's why we call it a gentleman's game," said Yap, who plays with his Stag teammates Vic Varona, Dindo Ventura, Dennis Yamzon and team leader Eric De Leon in different war game areas around the city and in the provinces.

"If you don't admit that you're hit, you'll be declared a 'zombie' and will be banned from playing in that venue," he added.

Like in every combat sport, safety is one of the major concerns.

"Athletes and players are exposed to danger in combat sports," said Yap. "So the organizers make sure that the players wear the right protective gears for the face. No eye-protection, no play."

For now, war games are held in the confines of a private venue until such time the authorities hear the plea of airsoft gun enthusiasts bidding to have their weapons of leisure legalized.

When that time comes, Yap expects the followers of the sport to multiply a fold but with stricter rules and guidelines in place.

P2-MILLION POT

Subic hosts rich chessfest

By Roy Luarca

THE RICHEST EVER CHESS tournament in the country with a total purse of $40,000 (about P1.96 million) will be staged in Subic, Olongapo, from April 10-20.

Dubbed as Philippine International Open Chess Championship, the nine-round Swiss system tournament was an offshoot of the $26,000 President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo Cup, which was staged by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines under Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay last November.

Expected to join the chase for the $6,000 top purse apart from national pool members are the powerhouse Chinese, players from the former Soviet Republics and stalwarts from Pakistan, Vietnam, Indonesia and Pakistan.

"In terms of cash prizes and foreign and local participation, this will surely be the biggest and most prestigious chess tournament in the country (after the 1992 Manila Chess Olympiad)," said Pichay, who is optimistic his biggest project since assuming the NCFP presidency last year will be a resounding success.

The runner-up and third placer will receive $4,000 and $3,500, respectively .

Apart from the juicy prizes, the event will also stake Grandmaster, International Master and Fide Master results, according to Fide (World Chess Federation).

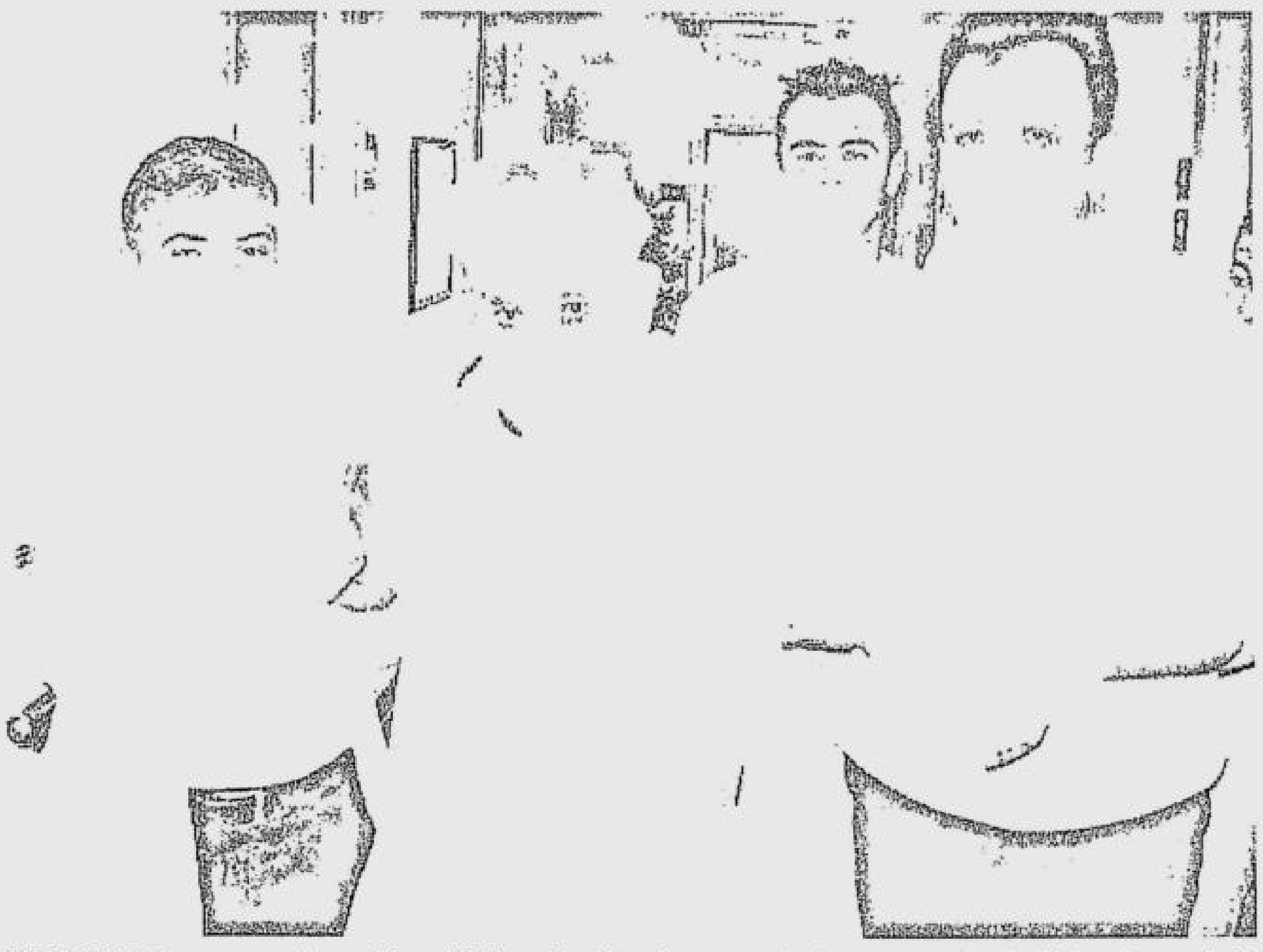
Registration is free for players with Fide rating of 2500 and above like GMs Mark Paragua, Rogelio "Joey" Antonio and Eugene Torre.

The opening ceremonies and the first round will be held on April 11 starting at 3 p.m. The second round is on April 12.

Toti Abundo, the Philippine representative to Fide, will serve as the tournament director.

A side event, the Philippine International Chess Challenge, will be held simultaneously for players with rating 2200 and below.

Those Interested must register not later than March 31 or e-mail the NCFP secretariat at NCFPsecretariat@yahoo.com or NCFP secretary-general Abraham Tolentino at ant_ncfpsecgen@yahoo.com.ph.



FLORENCIO Campomanes (second from left) is assisted in a therapy session by neurosurgeon Dr. Hakan Ozsuer (left) and orthopedic surgeon Dr. Burak Germen (right).

FIDE.COM

Well-wishes for Campo pour

GET-WELL WISHES AND PRAYERS for the swift recovery of lifetime honorary International Chess Federation president Florencio Campomanes, hospitalized in Antalya, Turkey, after figuring in a car accident early this month, continue to pour worldwide.

Former president Fidel V. Ramos and First Lady Amelita "Ming" Ramos were the latest to send their greetings to Campomanes, who turns 80 on Feb. 22.

Ramos was the president when Manila, through Campomanes who was Fide president from 1982-1995, hosted the World Chess Olympiad in 1992. The Manila Olympiad is still considered by many as the best and most well-organized in recent years.

Campomanes has expressed a desire to return to the Philippines, although his attending physicians at the modern Antalya Anadolu Hospital have advised against it because of his advanced age.

Bahnarim Guinomla, the Philippine Ambassador to Turkey, has requested the Department of Foreign Affairs to expedite the processing of the travel papers of his wife and son in Manila so they could be in Turkey in time for Campomanes' 80th birthday.

Hot fight weather engulfs Cebu City

CEBU CITY—TORRID FIGHT WEATHER SETS in ahead of summer here with the scheduled arrival today of Mexican World Boxing Organization (WBO) super flyweight champion Fernando "Cochulito" Montiel and Colombian WBC Latino super bantam king Feider Viloria from their native countries.

BAUTISTA

Montiel, who will defend his world title against local boy Z "The Dream" Gorres on Feb. 24 here, has left Los Angeles for Manila with a connecting flight to Cebu and is scheduled to touch down at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport early morning today.

He will be accompanied by his father-trainer-manager Manuel Montiel, and his brothers Eduardo, Pedro, and Manuel Jr.

Viloria, who will duke it out with Boholano sensation Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista in the co-feature of Cebu's biggest boxing extravaganza dubbed as "The Moment of Truth," has taken the Baranquilla-Amsterdam-Manila route and is expected to arrive in Cebu at 1:30 p.m.

He will be with Roberto Duran Jr., son of the boxing legend who will assist his trainer.

Montiel, in an interview with the media prior to his departure, said he wanted to "fight now."

"More than ever, I need this victory, I cannot fail and for that I worked intensely, which gives me the confidence," the WBO champ said.

Montiel, who admitted he knew very little of Gorres' style, said he needs to fight an intelligent fight, study the challenger's moves in the early rounds—and go for the knockout. *Salven L. Lalgumbay, Contributor*

Tagaytay hosts Mizuno Scramble Classic tilt

THE MIZUNO SCRAMBLE GOLF Classic resumes at the scenic Tagaytay Midlands course today with a full field of 70 teams disputing the last three slots at stake for the grand finals.

The Tagaytay tourney is the seventh and last eliminations leg leading to the grand finals at the Ayala Greenfield Estates course.

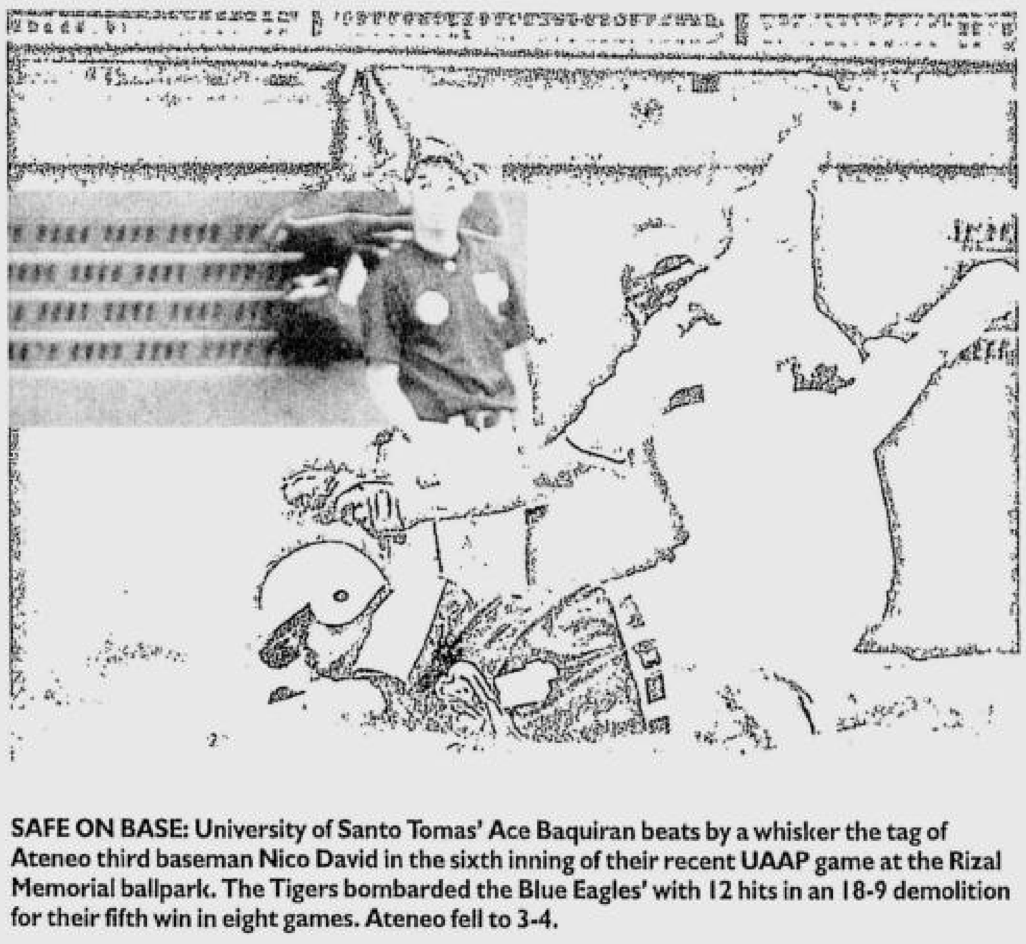
Division champions clash for an all-expense paid trip to Japan plus the opportunity to watch the Mizuno LPGA Classic where Annika Sorenstam and the other world superstars play.

In the most recent of the series revived this year by Mizuno at Eastridge, Eric del Rosario and Ferdie Aunzo topped Class A with a 61, Roddie Cruz and Henry Lacuna ruled Class B with a 69 and Emil Francisco and Mark Francisco topped Class C with a 74.

The Benner at the Riviera, Casino Filipino/Pagcor, BMW Philippines and Philippine Airlines are the major sponsors of the Mizuno Scramble Classic. The other sponsors are INQUIRER Golf, Citibank, Mail&More, Renee Barbier Wines, Discovery Suites, Diamond Hotel, Pepsi, Gatorade, BMG Solar, Power Bar, Oakley, Citgo, C-Lium Fibre, and Golf Digest Philippines.

Already in the finals are the division winners in legs played at Valley, Sherwood Hills, Eagle Ridge, Orchard, Royal Northwoods, Sta. Elena, Manila Southwoods, Eastridge and Tagaytay Midlands.

For questions and inquiries, please E-mail scramble@mizuno.ph.



SAFE ON BASE: University of Santo Tomas' Ace Baquiran beats by a whisker the tag of Ateneo third baseman Nico David in the sixth inning of their recent UAAP game at the Rizal Memorial ballpark. The Tigers bombarded the Blue Eagles' with 12 hits in an 18-9 demolition for their fifth win in eight games. Ateneo fell to 3-4.

Jaca's power awes trainer

JIMREX JACA IS SO FOCUSED ON HIS TRAINing at the ALA Gym for his showdown with Indonesia's Simson Butar-Butar on Feb. 24 such that his trainer Robert Bubuli has started complaining of his power and tenacity.

"My arms ache every time I hold the mitts against him during training," said Bubuli.

Jaca will challenge Butar-Butar for the WBO Asia Pacific superfeatherweight crown in the "Moment of Truth" card at the Cebu City Sports Complex, a fight that the Cebu-based Negrense hopes will lead to bigger things.

Jaca has indicated that he is training hard and putting in the effort for his family and country, saying that he cannot afford to let them down.

"My promoter Oscar De La Hoya has told me that he might put me as an undercard to his bout on May 5 with Floyd Mayweather, that's why I'm putting in the work," Jaca stressed.

De La Hoya had earlier hinted that he might put Jaca in his card. *Salven Lagumbay, contributor*

Mavs notch 9th straight victory

HOUSTON—JASON TERRY HIT A GO-AHEAD jumper with 1:09 remaining and made two free throws in the final seconds to give the Dallas Mavericks an 80-77 win over the Houston Rockets on Thursday night, extending their winning streak to nine games.

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Terry also made a pair of free throws just seconds before his jumper.

Dirk Nowitzki had 26 points for Mavericks. Tracy McGrady led Houston with 27.

"They're very good defensively," Rockets coach Jeff Van Gundy told reporters. "We didn't play with assertiveness."

Cavaliers 114, Lakers 108

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The win was the fourth in five games for the Cavaliers (31-22), who enter the All-Star break with the second-best record in the Eastern Conference.

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Anderson Varejao added 15 points and 11 rebounds, Larry Hughes scored 14, and Eric Snow had 13 points, eight rebounds and five assists for the Cavaliers, who had seven player in double figures.

Kobe Bryant led the Lakers with 34 points, six rebounds and five assists. Lamar Odom had 20 points and eight rebounds and Sasha Vujacic scored 14 for Los Angeles. *AP*

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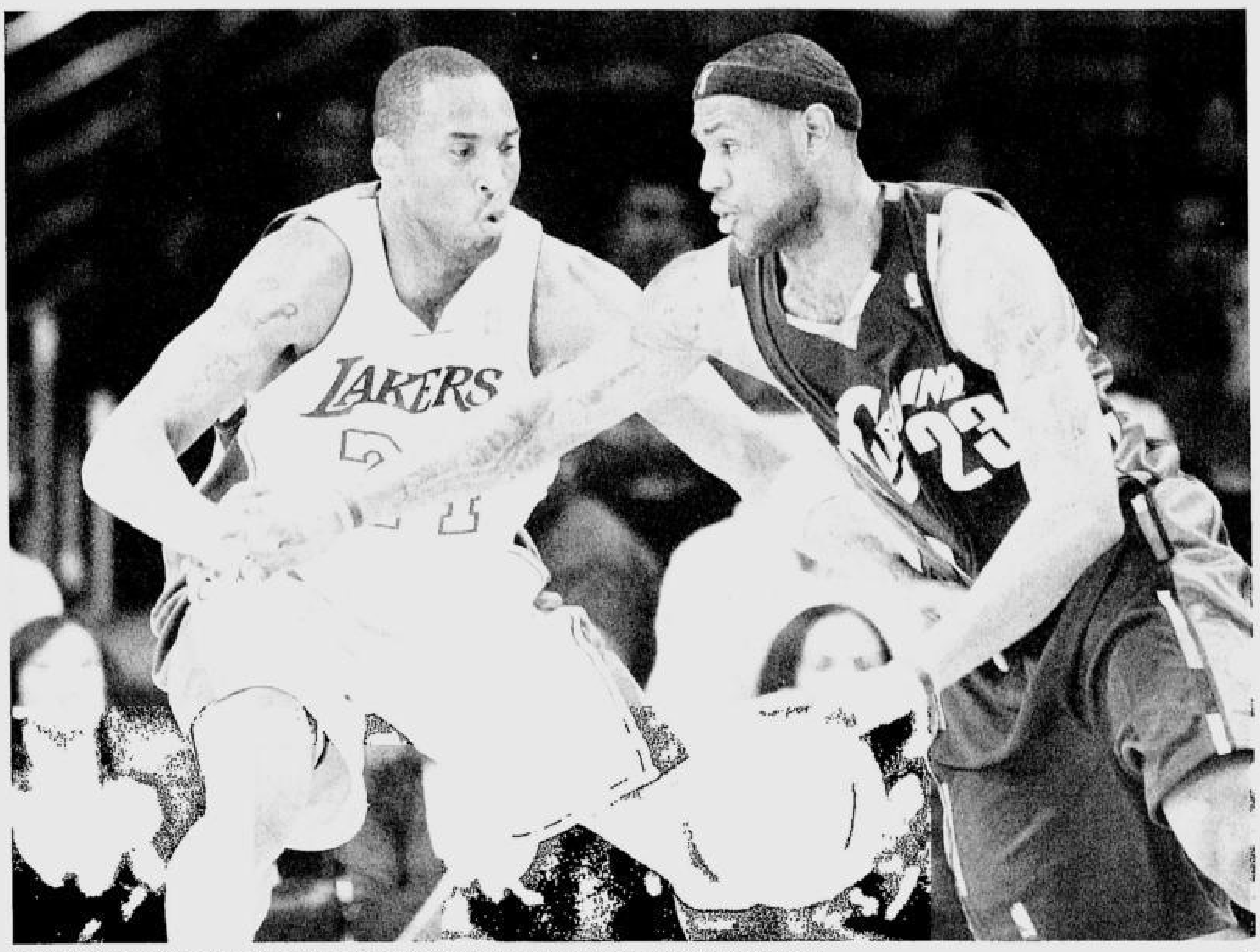

CLEVELAND main man LeBron James (right) drives past Los Angeles superstar Kobe Bryant. AP

Two months after trade, all's good for Iverson

NUGGETS guard Allen Iverson can finally call Denver home. AP

DENVER—FOR 31 YEARS, ALL Allen Iverson knew was the East Coast. He embarked on the biggest change of his life when he agreed to a trade from Philadelphia to the Denver Nuggets on Dec. 19.

Two months later, life is good. He's in Las Vegas, having made another All-Star team, although he'll have to sit out Sunday's game with an ankle injury.

More importantly, he and his family—wife Tawanna and four children—are warming to Denver.

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"That was the most important thing, to let them know there was life outside of Philadelphia. There were other schools besides the schools in Philadelphia. There are other friends they can make besides friends in Philadelphia."

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"After leaving Philadelphia, I'm thinking, 'Is there life after that?'" Iverson said. "Then you get to a situation like this and everything is cool. It's comfortable as far as my family situation.

Positive people

"There are positive people around here. You kind of get scared of that because that ain't how it's always been in my career in Philadelphia. There were times where I was like, 'I don't want to go to work. I don't want to go in there. I don't want to be around certain people.' It's just different."

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Off-court missteps

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"He's a rock star (there). He couldn't go anywhere," said Rick Brunson, the Nuggets player development coach who played with Iverson in Philly.

In the Nuggets' locker room, Iverson blended in quickly. He often jokes with teammates or sings hip-hop songs. He was already close with Carmelo Anthony and is now close with Marcus Camby, Kenyon Martin, DerMarr Johnson and JR Smith, all of whom hail from the East Coast.

"I just talked to him about school and stuff and where his kids were going to go to school and whether he was going to enroll them this semester (here)," Camby said. "I told him it was a good place to raise his family."

Said Martin: "He adds a personality of his own. Laughs. Jokes. Sings. Cracks jokes. We were already silly to begin with. We added more to it." *New York Times News Service*

SBS golf: Rosales flounders with 79

KAHUKU, HAWAII—THE LAST TWO CHAMPIONS of the SBS Open got off to horrendous starts Thursday in the LPGA's season-opening tournament, including Filipino Jennifer Rosales.

Rosales, the 2005 champion, was at 79 after a horrendous start that included two bogeys and two double bogeys in the first five holes, falling 12 shots out of pace.

Fil-Am Dorthy Delasin had a better start with an even 72 to stay within five shots of the lead.

Defending champion Joo Mi Kim, on the other hand, struggled to a 5-over 77, 10 behind a trio of leaders.

Paula Creamer shot a 5-under-par 67 for a share of the first-round lead with rookie Paige Mackenzie and veteran Sherri Steinhauer in the LPGA Tour's season-opening SBS Open.

Julieta Granada was a stroke back at 68 along with Natalie Gulbis, Sung Ah Yim and Wendy Ward.

Creamer is seeking her first win since 2005 when she won twice and earned rookie of the year honors. Last season, Creamer had 14 top-10 finishes, including a second-place tie in the LPGA Tournament of Champions. *AP*

Boxing icons pick Gorres, 'Boom Boom'

FUTURE HALL-OF FAMERS BERNARD HOPkins and Sugar Shane Mosley have voiced their support for Filipino boxers seeing action in the "Moment of Truth" card on Feb. 24 at the Cebu City Sports Complex.

Hopkins, former world middleweight champion and business partner of the Golden Boy Promotions, called Rey 'Boom Boom' Bautista, a future world champion, in an interview with ABS-CBN.

"You can do it, Boom-Boom. You're my man. Show them what you've got," Hopkins said.

Hopkins had seen Bautista in action on December 2 last year when Boom Boom fought in a card in Tampa, Florida which Hopkins graced together with Oscar De la Hoya and Mosley.

Mosley, WBC interim welterweight king, exhorted everyone to go out and support the Filipino fighters in the "Moment of Truth" card.

Mosley is coming off a brilliant 12-round unanimous decision win over Luis Collazo for the interim WBC welterweight crown on Sunday.

Mosley had also met Bautista at the Tampa, Florida card last year and was impressed with the talent of the hard-punching Filipino.

Meanwhile, both WBO superfly king Fernando Montiel and Colombian Feider Viloria will hold public workouts at the Fight Club in Banilad Trade Center on Feb. 20, starting at 5 p.m.

Holyfield, Hopkins still going at it

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS—EVANDER Holyfield will look to stay perfect since coming out of retirement when he fights Vinny Maddalone on March 17.

The 44-year-old former heavyweight boxing champion has won both fights since returning from a two-year layoff, improving to 40-8 with two draws. His first comeback fight was a second-round knockout of Jeremy Bates in Dallas in August. In November, Holyfield won a decision over Frez Oquindo in San Antonio.

The 33-year-old Maddalone (27-3, 19 KOs) is from New York City.

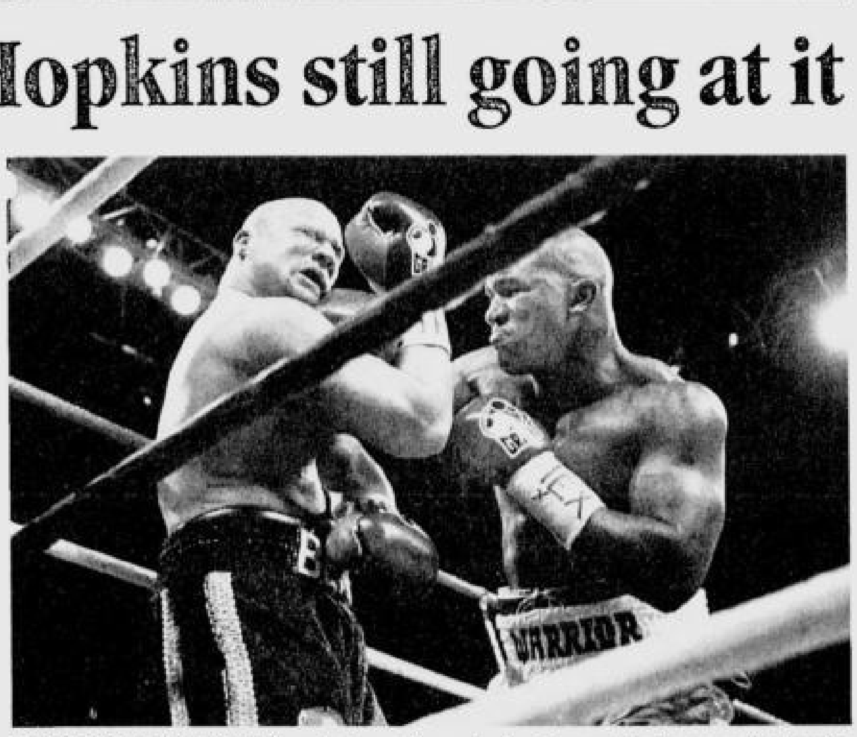
The fight will mark Holyfield's second professional fight in Corpus Christi. He knocked out Jesse Shelby in 1986, and captured his first world title two fights later.

In Pennsylvania, Bernard Hopkins, the former middleweight boxing champion who retired eight months ago, will return to the ring July 21 to fight former junior middleweight champion Winky Wright.

The two will meet in a 170-pound bout, just above super middleweight level, at a site to be determined.

Hopkins, 42, called it quits after defeating Antonio Tarver last June in Atlantic City, New Jersey, while Wright, 35, is a strong middleweight after moving up from a division where he was once undisputed champion.

Hopkins is 47-4 with one draw and 32 knockouts while Wright is 51-3 with one drawn and 25 knockouts.



EVANDER Holyfield (right) wants to continue plowing through the heavyweight ranks.

Despite having promised his late mother Shirley that he would retire for good by his 41st birthday, Hopkins fought Tarver five months after turning 41 and said it would be his farewell.

"I know in some ways I can't justify this decision," Hopkins told the Philadelphia Daily News.

"But my mama Shirley, I think, would be OK with this.

"I'm ready, man. I have a new career. If I don't get any cuts, any injuries and I can stay out of the real hard fights, I could go another 4 or 5 years."

Hopkins asked Golden Boy Promotions chief executive Richard Schaefer to sign a top foe. He looked at Britain's unbeaten Joe Calzaghe, former world champion Roy Jones and and undisputed cruiserweight king O'Neil Bell.

Hopkins had even pondered making a play for the crown of World Boxing Council champion Oleg Maskaev of Russia in a giant killer move similar to that Jones made in taking a heavyweight title from John Ruiz. *AP, AFP*

Harrington leads Nissan tournament

LOS ANGELES—PADRAIG HARRINGTON shot an 8-under 63 Thursday and zoomed past Phil Mickelson and everyone to take the first-round lead the Nissan Open.

Harrington opened with three straight birdies. He ran off four in a row after making the turn, and even picked one up on the tough 15th hole when his 5-iron hit the pin and settled 4 feet away.

His only bogey on the back nine came from a three-putt on the par-3 14th, and the Irishman had a reasonable explanation for that.

"At this stage, I'm feeling invincible," he said. "I didn't think I was ever not going to make birdie."

It gave him a three-shot lead over Mickelson, Briny Baird and Pat Perez. Jim Furyk, Sergio Garcia and David Howell were among those in the group at 67 on a spectacular day of sunshine and shotmaking on the storied Riviera Country Club off Sunset Boulevard.

Six players failed to finish the first round when it was too dark to continue; they will finish Friday morning.

Mickelson is playing for the first time since 2001 at Riviera, where he has never had much success.

Vijay Singh started eagle-birdie, but a couple of late bogeys brought him a 68. Retief Goosen made only seven pars in his round of 71. *AP*

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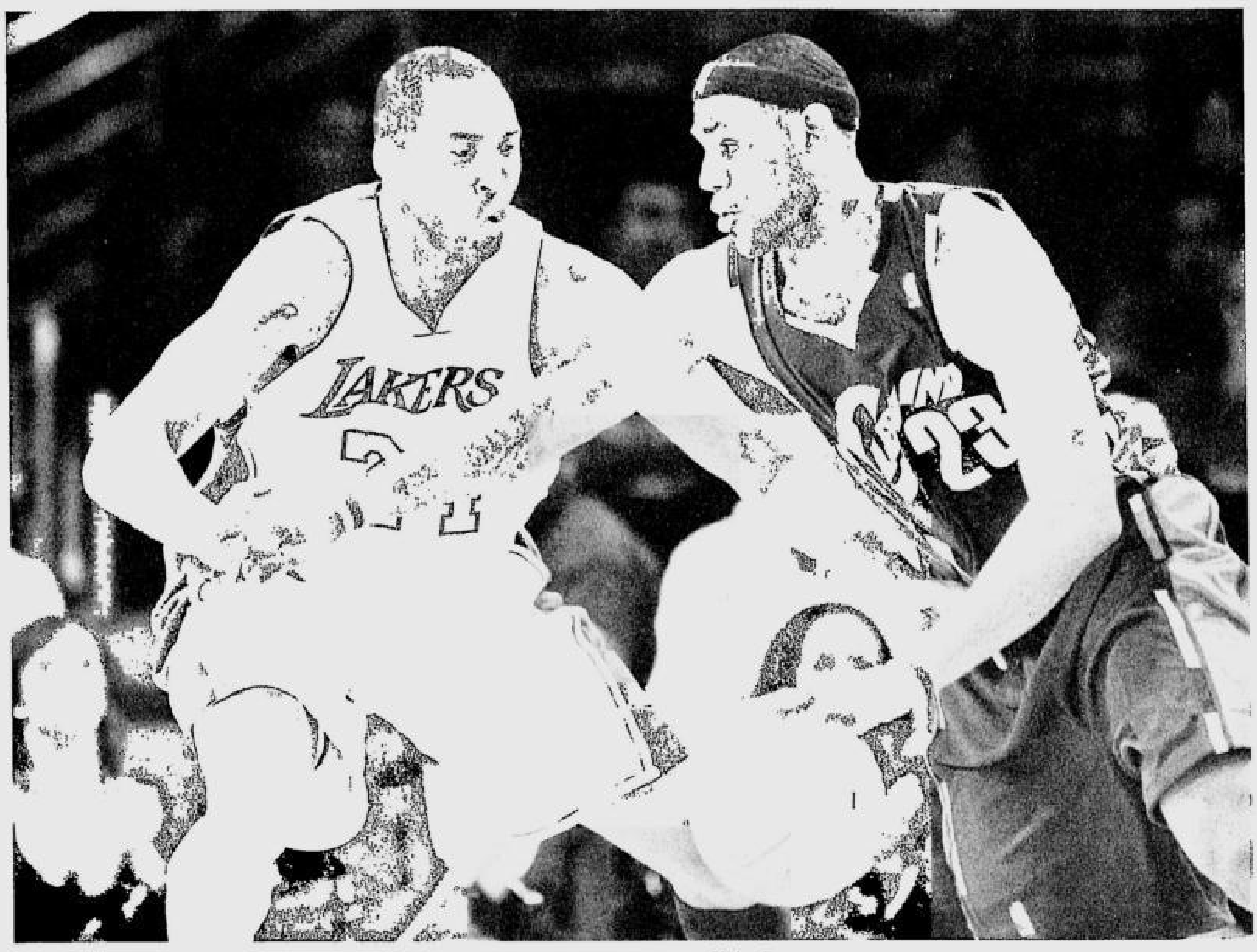

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"He's a rock star (there). He couldn't go anywhere," said Rick Brunson, the Nuggets player development coach who played with Iverson in Philly.

In the Nuggets' locker room, Iverson blended in quickly. He often jokes with teammates or sings hip-hop songs. He was already close with Carmelo Anthony and is now close with Marcus Camby, Kenyon Martin, DerMarr Johnson and JR Smith, all of whom hail from the East Coast.

"I just talked to him about school and stuff and where his kids were going to go to school and whether he was going to enroll them this semester (here)," Camby said. "I told him it was a good place to raise his family."

Said Martin: "He adds a personality of his own. Laughs. Jokes. Sings. Cracks jokes. We were already silly to begin with. We added more to it." *New York Times News Service*

SBS golf: Rosales flounders with 79

KAHUKU, HAWAII—THE LAST TWO CHAMPIONS of the SBS Open got off to horrendous starts Thursday in the LPGA's season-opening tournament, including Filipino Jennifer Rosales.

Rosales, the 2005 champion, was at 79 after a horrendous start that included two bogeys and two double bogeys in the first five holes, falling 12 shots out of pace.

Fil-Am Dorthy Delasin had a better start with an even 72 to stay within five shots of the lead.

Defending champion Joo Mi Kim, on the other hand, struggled to a 5-over 77, 10 behind a trio of leaders.

Paula Creamer shot a 5-under-par 67 for a share of the first-round lead with rookie Paige Mackenzie and veteran Sherri Steinhauer in the LPGA Tour's season-opening SBS Open.

Julieta Granada was a stroke back at 68 along with Natalie Gulbis, Sung Ah Yim and Wendy Ward.

Creamer is seeking her first win since 2005 when she won twice and earned rookie of the year honors. Last season, Creamer had 14 top-10 finishes, including a second-place tie in the LPGA Tournament of Champions. *AP*

Boxing icons pick Gorres, 'Boom Boom'

FUTURE HALL-OF FAMERS BERNARD HOPkins and Sugar Shane Mosley have voiced their support for Filipino boxers seeing action in the "Moment of Truth" card on Feb. 24 at the Cebu City Sports Complex.

Hopkins, former world middleweight champion and business partner of the Golden Boy Promotions, called Rey 'Boom Boom' Bautista, a future world champion, in an interview with ABS-CBN.

"You can do it, Boom-Boom. You're my man. Show them what you've got," Hopkins said.

Hopkins had seen Bautista in action on December 2 last year when Boom Boom fought in a card in Tampa, Florida which Hopkins graced together with Oscar De la Hoya and Mosley.

Mosley, WBC interim welterweight king, exhorted everyone to go out and support the Filipino fighters in the "Moment of Truth" card.

Mosley is coming off a brilliant 12-round unanimous decision win over Luis Collazo for the interim WBC welterweight crown on Sunday.

Mosley had also met Bautista at the Tampa, Florida card last year and was impressed with the talent of the hard-punching Filipino.

Meanwhile, both WBO superfly king Fernando Montiel and Colombian Feider Viloria will hold public workouts at the Fight Club in Banilad Trade Center on Feb. 20, starting at 5 p.m.

Holyfield, Hopkins still going at it

EVANDER Holyfield (right) wants to continue plowing through the heavyweight ranks.

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS—EVANDER Holyfield will look to stay perfect since coming out of retirement when he fights Vinny Maddalone on March 17.

The 44-year-old former heavyweight boxing champion has won both fights since returning from a two-year layoff, improving to 40-8 with two draws. His first comeback fight was a second-round knockout of Jeremy Bates in Dallas in August. In November, Holyfield won a decision over Frez Oquindo in San Antonio.

The 33-year-old Maddalone (27-3, 19 KOs) is from New York City.

The fight will mark Holyfield's second professional fight in Corpus Christi. He knocked out Jesse Shelby in 1986, and captured his first world title two fights later.

In Pennsylvania, Bernard Hopkins, the former middleweight boxing champion who retired eight months ago, will return to the ring July 21 to fight former junior middleweight champion Winky Wright.

The two will meet in a 170-pound bout, just above super middleweight level, at a site to be determined.

Hopkins, 42, called it quits after defeating Antonio Tarver last June in Atlantic City, New Jersey, while Wright, 35, is a strong middleweight after moving up from a division where he was once undisputed champion.

Hopkins is 47-4 with one draw and 32 knockouts while Wright is 51-3 with one drawn and 25 knockouts.

Despite having promised his late mother Shirley that he would retire for good by his 41st birthday, Hopkins fought Tarver five months after turning 41 and said it would be his farewell.

"I know in some ways I can't justify this decision," Hopkins told the Philadelphia Daily News.

"But my mama Shirley, I think, would be OK with this.

"I'm ready, man. I have a new career. If I don't get any cuts, any injuries and I can stay out of the real hard fights, I could go another 4 or 5 years."

Hopkins asked Golden Boy Promotions chief executive Richard Schaefer to sign a top foe. He looked at Britain's unbeaten Joe Calzaghe, former world champion Roy Jones and and undisputed cruiserweight king O'Neil Bell.

Hopkins had even pondered making a play for the crown of World Boxing Council champion Oleg Maskaev of Russia in a giant killer move similar to that Jones made in taking a heavyweight title from John Ruiz. *AP, AFP*

Harrington leads Nissan tournament

LOS ANGELES—PADRAIG HARRINGTON shot an 8-under 63 Thursday and zoomed past Phil Mickelson and everyone to take the first-round lead the Nissan Open.

Harrington opened with three straight birdies. He ran off four in a row after making the turn, and even picked one up on the tough 15th hole when his 5-iron hit the pin and settled 4 feet away.

His only bogey on the back nine came from a three-putt on the par-3 14th, and the Irishman had a reasonable explanation for that.

"At this stage, I'm feeling invincible," he said. "I didn't think I was ever not going to make birdie."

It gave him a three-shot lead over Mickelson, Briny Baird and Pat Perez. Jim Furyk, Sergio Garcia and David Howell were among those in the group at 67 on a spectacular day of sunshine and shotmaking on the storied Riviera Country Club off Sunset Boulevard.

Six players failed to finish the first round when it was too dark to continue; they will finish Friday morning.

Mickelson is playing for the first time since 2001 at Riviera, where he has never had much success.

Vijay Singh started eagle-birdie, but a couple of late bogeys brought him a 68. Retief Goosen made only seven pars in his round of 71. *AP*

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TRIATHLETES Alessandra Araullo and Ani Karina De Leon are expected to spearhead the Philippine challenge anew in the National Championships starting tomorrow.

3 NSAs intensify hunt for talents

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THREE NATIONAL SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS (NSAs) have just posted a "Help Wanted" sign right at their doors.

The triathlon, equestrian and table tennis associations yesterday announced their nationwide search for new talents who will be tapped to see action in the Thailand Southeast Asian Games in December.

Triathlon Association of the Philippines president Tom Carrasco trumpeted the National Championships which will be held tomorrow at the Clearwater Country Club in Clark Field, Pampanga.

Easily, Carrasco said 50 of the 140 who registered are under 19 years old, assuring an infusion of fresh blood to the sport. The roster includes 17-year-old Rowan Fernandez from Cebu who accompanied Carrasco in the Scoop sa Kamayan-Padre Faura session.

Carrasco said six foreign triathletes have confirmed their participation, including a Fil-American from Hawaii and five junior campaigners from Hong Kong.

"Those who are 19 and below came from our junior programs and we want to hone their skills further by letting them compete in the National Championships," said Carrasco.

Equestrian secretary general Mitos Belofsky announced the association's selection process to be held on Feb. 24-25 at the Manila Polo Club. The search for successors of Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski and Toni Leviste will also have stops on March 10-11 and April 13 at the MPC, and March 24-25 at the Alabang Country Club field.

Table Tennis Association of the Philippines chief Vic Valbuena said they will embark on an ambitious program aimed at improving their silver-medal finish during the 2005 SEA Games held here.

To spur their talent search, Tatap will hold the National age-group championships on March 17-19 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

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Peso still rising, now at 48.10 to $1

Currency seen breaking into 47 level soon

By Doris C. Dumlao

ROBUST STOCK MARKET INFLOWS AND A backdrop of a strong Asian currency market yesterday sent the peso even closer to the 47 level against the dollar, closing at a new six-year high of 48.10 to the US dollar.

"The peso continued to display an impressive performance on equity and custody-related dollar inflows and overseas Filipino workers' remittances," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

The peso closed near the intraday peak of 48.09 after hitting a low of 48.185 at the Philippine Dealing System yesterday with volume turnover of $439 million.

The local currency has now risen by 93 centavos or about 1.9 percent against the dollar, making it emerging Asia's strongest currency so far this year. It is now trading at its highest level since hitting 48.06 on March 12, 2001.

Tetangco said the local currency was likewise supported by reports that Wilshire Associates Inc., the research consultant of the US' biggest pension fund California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS), had come up with a more favorable assessment on the country.

The favorable sentiment on the peso and other Asian currencies was likewise underpinned by the rebounding Japanese yen, in turn bolstered by a stronger-than-expected growth of 4.8 percent by the world's second largest economy in the fourth quarter of 2006.

"It's due to the strong regional market led by the yen and momentum for the peso, with the PSEi (Philippine Stock Exchange composite index) testing all-time highs," said Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. senior vice presi-

PESO/ B3

Singapore firm investing ₱7.5B in RP

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SINGAPORE-BASED BUSINESS SPACE provider Ascendas Pte. Ltd. announced yesterday it would invest up to P7.5 billion in five key projects of office developer Net Group of the Rufino and Dupasquier families.

In a briefing at the Net One Center in Fort Bonifacio Global City, Ascendas president Chong Siak Ching said the Singaporean firm would fund the P7.5 billion through equity and debts from local banks. Under the partnership, the Net Group would also identify investment opportunities for Ascendas and undertake the development of certain projects, Chong said.

Chong added that the project funding would cover five office buildings of the Net Group, including Net One, Net Square, Net Cube, Net Quad, and a fifth project slated to start construction in the second half of this year.

Sealing the strategic alliance, Ascendas and the Net Group unveiled the P2-billion, 20-storey Net Quad, the fourth building in the series of office buildings built by the Net Group at the bustling Fort Bonifacio business district. Net Quad will have 36,000 square meters of leasable area and is targeted for completion by the first quarter of 2008.

"We want to create a new generation of buildings to cater to the 24-7 office market," Net Group president Carlos Rufino said.

The Ascendas-Net Group partnership is also exploring investment opportunities in buildings catering to business process outsourcing (BPO) in Metro Manila and elsewhere in the country outside of the Fort Boni-

SINGAPORE/ B2

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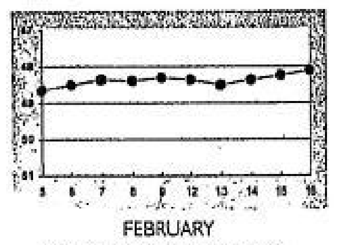

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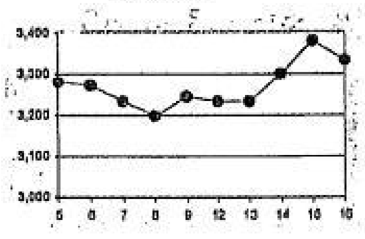

(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.36-percent lower yesterday, snapping a strong two-day advance, as investors locked in gains after the key index hit a 10-year high, dealers said.

SHARES/ B2

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- **Coco** exports seen falling 30% /B4
- **PCCI** prepares 23 areas for free trade /B8

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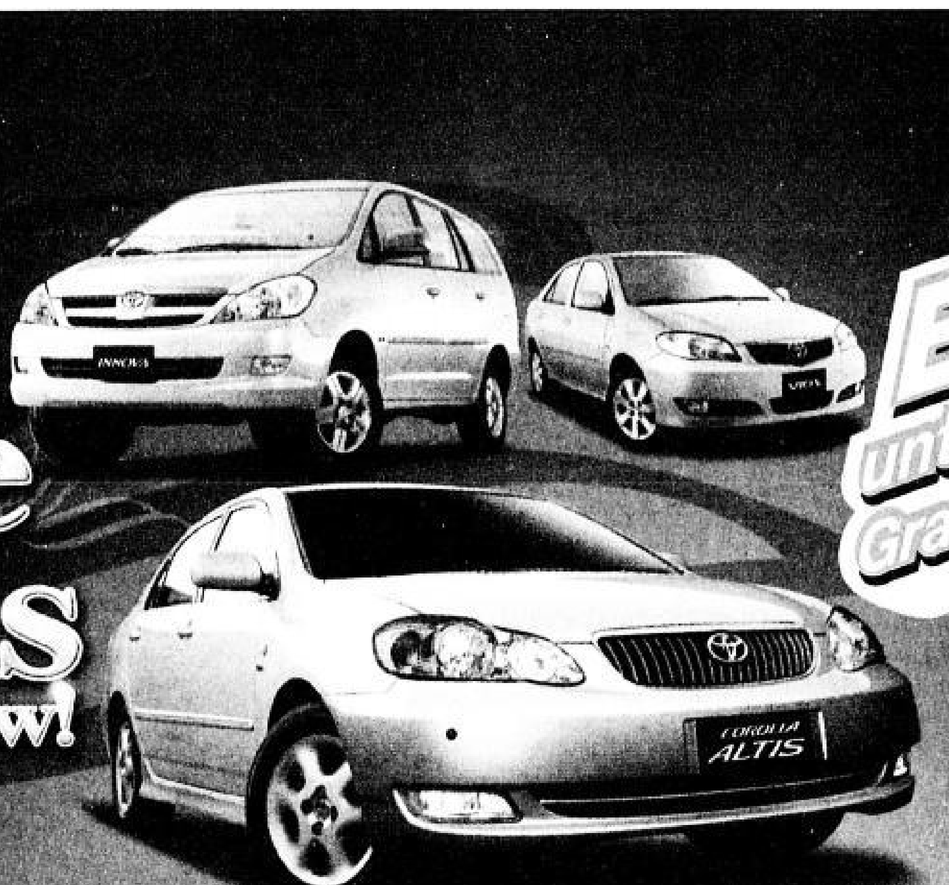

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		361,500	30,125	20,083	15,404	10,962	8,741	7,472	6,790
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New gold prospect found in Zambo

RP affiliate of Canada firm to conduct further studies in Canatuan

By Ronnel W. Domingo

Canada-based TVI Pacific Inc. yesterday announced that its Philippine affiliate has identified a new copper-gold prospect near its producing mine at Canatuan in Zamboanga del Norte.

Located 10 kilometers northeast of Canatuan, the find is said to be significant for TVI Resource Development (Phils.) Inc.'s operations, considering that one of the company's goals is to extend the mine life in the area by securing new resources.

Evaluation of samples obtained directly from the Tabingan outcrop yielded as much as 5.5 grams of gold and 1.82 percent copper per ton, the firm said.

Clifford James, president and chief executive of TVI Pacific, said in a statement that potential new gossan and/or sulphide deposits in the area could result in an alternative mill feed source for the Canatuan mine.

Dictionaries describe gossan as an exposed, oxidized portion of a mineral vein, especially a rust-colored outcrop of iron ore.

But James added that further work, "including systematic mapping, test-pitting, trenching and eventually drilling, is required to evaluate the potential of the Tabingan prospect."

The Tabingan outcrop was identified as a result of TVIRD's reconnaissance work , which targets, among other areas, tenements surrounding Canatuan.

Prospecting activities involved mapping as well as taking and analyzing channel and limited geochemical samples.

TVIRD explained that the objective of such work is to discover additional resources that might be processed through the Canatuan facility in order to extend the current estimated mine life of eight years.

Also, the report said Tambingan samples showed a "massive sulphide" contained in ores that were similar to those found in Canatuan.

The occurrence of such samples was estimated to reach up to 20 meters in thickness, and has been so far traced over several hundred meters along two tributaries to the Tabingan Creek, it added.

The total surface area of the TVIRD tenement hosting the outcrop is 14,580 hectares. Parts of it remain unexplored.

TVIRD said that due to the find, its 2007 exploration program would prioritize the further evaluation of the Tabingan sulphide body.

In July 2006, TVIRD country manager John B. Ridsdel said the firm would pour in additional investments of up to $25 million to expand its operations in the Zamboanga peninsula, following favorable results of a feasibility study which showed that the sulphide project in its Canatuan mine was "economically viable and desirable."

Ridsdel said TVIRD would go into extracting sulphides-copper and zinc, in addition to mining for gold and silver in the same area.

He also said that the study called for TVIRD to spend another $25 million between July and May 2007, when the project would be expected to commence.

₱601B marked for debt service

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT plans to spend P601.4 billion this year to service its maturing obligations, the lowest amount allotted for debt servicing since 2004.

The programmed amount for debt servicing this year will be 30 percent lower than the P854.4 billion recorded in 2006.

Of the P601.4 billion set aside to cover the government's liabilities, P299.8 billion will be accounted for by principal debts, while the slightly bigger amount of P301.6 billion will be used to pay interest.

The government's outstanding debt had ballooned in the past partly because of its budget deficits, which forced the government to borrow in order to meet its expenditure requirements. The deficit started to rise after the Asian financial crisis, which led to lower corporate earnings and drop in tax collection.

The depreciation of the peso also led to an increase in the government's outstanding debt because it bloated the foreign-denominated liabilities.

But authorities said that the fiscal climate has changed since then. Now, the government's budget deficit has been declining, while the peso is strengthening against the US dollar.

With the decreasing deficit, the government's borrowing requirement has been reduced and the growth of its outstanding debt tempered. The continuing appreciation of the peso is also expected to cut the amount of the government's foreign-denominated debts.

The peso has recently breached the 49-to-a-dollar level, and now hovers in the 48:$1.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. earlier noted that the P301.6-billion budget allotted for interest payments this year marked the first drop since 1996.

The last time the government registered a decrease in interest payments was in 1995, when the budget allocated for it dropped to P72.65 billion from P79.12 billion in 1994. Since then, the annual allocation for interest payments had increased, reaching P310.1 billion in 2006.

Andaya said 2007 would be the turning point, as allocations for interest payments are expected to slide further in the years to come.

Megaworld in BPO building frenzy

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

OFFICE DEVELOPER MEGAworld Corp. is aggressively building new facilities for business process outsourcing firms as it expects the sector's growth to pick up by 20 to 30 percent a year.

Megaworld said that by 2008, it would make available up to 250,000 square meters of office space—about 50 percent of its target for the next five years, said Jericho Go, Megaworld vice president for business development.

In the next five years, Megaworld plans to build at least 500,000 square meters of office space.

The Eastwood City CyberPark in Quezon City, the country's first information technology park accredited by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority, is Megaworld's foremost supplier of office space. It is home to over 60 firms—half of which belong to the fast-growing business process outsourcing (BPO) and IT-enabled services sector.

"The development of BPO office space is a critical component of our business," Go said. "We are focused on building not just stand-alone office developments but office projects that are part of self-contained communities."

Five office projects are set to rise at the site. One is e-Commerce Plaza, which is slated for completion by yearend. Also, 1880 Eastwood Avenue, will offer some 35,000 square meters of leasable space. Global One Center, with a floor area of about 35,000 square meters, will be finished by the second half of 2008. TechnoPlaza 2, on the other hand, will add more than 38,000 square meters to the CyberPark's inventory by the second half of 2009.

Megaworld is a pioneer in BPO office space development. Since 1996, it has built more than 325,000 square meters of office space.

Makati Med gets SEC nod to offer ₱900M in notes

HOSPITAL OPERATOR MEDICAL Doctors Inc. (MDI), which runs the Makati Medical Center, has gained the approval of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to raise funds by offering up to P900 million in convertible notes.

The funds will be used to improve the hospital's facilities.

Makati Medical chair Manuel V. Pangilinan, who also heads Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC), said that the holding firm is thinking of acquiring P600 million worth of notes.

The MDI board in a meeting last December approved the offering of up to P750 million in convertible notes, plus an over-allocation option of P150 million worth of convertible shares, documents filed with the SEC showed.

The fund raising activity, along with the implementation of a loan restructuring program, will ensure MDI's operation.

According to the program, MDI's creditors will be required an equity or quasi-equity infusion before the company's loans are restructured.

The notes carry a 7-percent per year interest rate, payable semi-annually and may be converted to shares at P800 apiece. The notes will be first offered to MDI existing shareholders. Any portion not taken up will be offered to not more than 19 institutional investors.

MDI has over 1,000 specialists and 1,493 regular employees as of Dec. 31. It is considered a public company with 643 stockholders each holding at least 100 shares. The majority stockholders consist of local companies and individual medical practitioners.

As of Sept. 30, 2006, MDI registered a net income of P119.1 million, a sharp increase from the P36.8 million it posted at the end of 2005. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Peso still rising, now at 48.10 to $1

From page B1

The composite index gave up 45.81 points to 3,333.56, after trading between 3,325.41 and 3,379.37.

The broader-all share index fell 18.68 points to 2,108.87. Losers led gainers 71 to 52, with 45 stocks unchanged.

Turnover was 5.8 billion shares worth P6.5 billion.

"Stocks were really prone to profit-taking after a gain of 4.5 percent in the past two sessions," said Rommel Macapagal of Westlink Global Equities.

"The market is likely to consolidate, moving up and down, but we hope it will stay above 3,300."

Claire Quiray of Accord Capital Equities said "all prospects on the economic front remain positive and the only hindrance now could be the uncertainties in the political front (ahead of the midterm elections in May)."

"But as long as interest rates remain low, most investors will stay in the stock market," she added.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. fell P25 to P2,595. Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. retreated 50 centavos to P67.50. Ayala Corp. was down P20 to P640. *AFP*

Singapore firm investing ₱7.5B in RP

From page B1

facio BPO zone, Chong said.

The first two in the Net Group—Net One and Net Square—are fully operational and both house leading multinational firms such as Quisumbing Torres, a member of the Baker & McKenzie group, Tetrapak, Ericsson and Sony. Net Cube, which has 19,200 square meters of leasable space, is fully leased and will be completed by the end of this year.

The Net Group is led by the Rufino family, which has been in property development for the past 75 years, and the Dupasquier family, a pioneer in middle-income housing development.

The Net Group buildings comprise Ascenda's second business space project in the Philippines after Carmelray Industrial Park II in Calamba, Laguna. Ascendas is Asia's leading provider of business space solutions with key markets in Singapore, China, India, the Philippines and South Korea. Ascendas develops, manages, and markets information technology (IT) parks, industrial parks, business parks, science parks, state-of-the-art facilities, office and retail space.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Land Bank nets P3.53B in 2006

THE STATE-OWNED Land Bank of the Philippines chalked up a net profit of P3.53 billion in 2006, up by 17 percent from a year ago, on higher earnings from loans and investments.

Land Bank president Gilda Pico on Thursday said that for 2007, the country's fourth biggest bank hopes to generate P3.9 billion in net profits—about 10 percent higher than the level chalked up last year.

For 2006, the bank was able to exceed its P3.3-billion year-end net income target by 7 percent to post a record-high net profit. During the same period, the bank released P37.3 billion worth of loans to boost the government's pump-priming program.

Pico said the higher profit posted in 2006 was brought on by the country's improved economic performance, the turnaround in the government's fiscal position, the peso's appreciation, and the downtrend in interest rates.

The growth was fueled by a 7-percent expansion in revenue from loans and investments to P24.3 billion, from P22.6 billion. Earnings from foreign exchange trading amounted to P813 million.

Net income reported for 2006 translated to a 12.6-percent return-on-equity (ROE) for the government, the bank's sole stockholder. Th ROE figure was higher than the industry average of 10.1 percent.

Total assets improved by 16 percent to P360.8 billion from P310.5 billion in 2005. Deposits recorded a 10-percent rise from P242.8 billion to P267.8 billion, while capital expanded by 6 percent from P24.7 billion to P33.7 billion. *Doris C. Dumlao*

Aboitiz unit clinches power agreement

ABOITIZ company Hedcor Inc. has secured a 12-year power supply agreement with sister firm Davao Light and Power Co. Inc. (DLPC) for 400 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of power priced at P4.0856 per kWh.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, holding company Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. said DLPC chose the Hedcor consortium, composed of Philippine Hydropower Corp., Hedcor Sibulan Inc. and Hedcor Tamugan Inc., all wholly owned subsidiaries of AEV, as its preferred bidder.

The agreement will be for the supply of DLPC's incremental load requirements starting August 2009. *Abigail L. Ho*

Vitarich on the road to rehabilitation

A BULACAN trial court has set poultry and feeds firm Vitarich Corp. on the road to rehabilitation.

The court saw merit in its corporate rehabilitation plan, said Vitarich corporate information officer Victoria Sarmiento.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, the firm said it received a copy of the court order from the Bulacan regional trial court Branch 7 last Feb. 14.

Sarmiento said the order granted Vitarich's petition "due course" and appointed a new receiver, Melito Salazar Jr., to evaluate the company's rehabilitation plan and submit his recommendation to the court not later than March 8.

Vitarich filed its petition for debt relief with the regional trial court of Malolos, Bulacan, where its facilities are based. It cited financial constraints stemming from the Asian currency crisis of 1998, as well as the aviation flu outbreak, which had affected sales.

In a stay order issued last Sept. 19, the Malolos court allowed Vitarich to temporarily suspend debt payments. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 16, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	10.75	13	10.25	12.5	2,130,400
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	64	64.5	64	64.5	2,550,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	71	71	69.5	69.5	2,147,700
China Banking Corp.	890	890	885	890	12,520
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	30	30	30	30	100
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.52	0.54	0.52	0.53	13,720,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	117	117	112	115	130,350
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	68.5	68.5	67	67.5	6,296,100
Philippine National Bank	53	53	51.5	51.5	55,600
Phil. Savings Bank	61	62	61	61	3,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	43	43	42	43	439,000
Security Bank Corp.	81.5	87	81.5	87	597,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	66	66.5	64.5	64.5	63,600
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.6	6.2	5.6	6.2	7,031,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	33	35	33	35	14,500
Manulife Financial Corp.	1650	1650	1650	1650	920
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2	2	2	2	2,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	550	560	540	550	122,160
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2130	2135	2130	2135	700
Ivantage Corp.	1.76	1.78	1.74	1.74	4,363,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.6	47,002,000
First Gen Corp.	58	58	57	57.5	1,038,300
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	81	81	78	78	881,000
Manila Electric Co. A	78.5	78.5	77	77	409,900
Manila Electric Co. B	79	79.5	78	78	560,600
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.8	9.9	9.7	9.8	6,003,000
Petron Corp.	4.7	4.7	4.65	4.7	9,677,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.3	5,260,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.32	1.32	1.28	1.28	689,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.85	4.1	3.85	4	363,000
Cen Azucar De Tarlac	3.9	3.9	2.8	2.8	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	28	28.5	27.5	28.5	157,200
Jollibee Foods Corp.	48	48	46.5	47	313,500
RFM Corp.	1.52	1.54	1.48	1.5	314,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.65	2.65	2.6	2.6	539,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.46	0.47	690,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65	65	64	64	169,000
San Miguel Corp. B	77	78	77	78	213,100
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.1	2.12	2.08	2.08	340,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	19.25	18.75	19	10,177,900
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.7	1.78	1.66	1.74	40,478,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.45	4.5	1,487,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.4	8.5	8.3	8.4	599,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6	6	6	6	6,000
Republic Cement Corp.	6.4	6.6	6.4	6.6	2,156,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.4	3,065,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	100,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.32	0.34	0.31	0.32	81,650,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	80,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.013	0.014	0.012	0.013	556,800,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.013	64,000,000
Ayala Corp.	655	655	635	640	450,850
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.85	0.87	0.81	0.82	4,340,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.2	8.2	8	8.2	10,991,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	4.1	4.2	3.5	3.55	191,133,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.0675	0.0675	52,600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	385,000
APC Group Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.42	0.43	16,760,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	97,600,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	6,435,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.58	1.7	1.58	1.66	303,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	15,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	4.15	4.2	3.95	4	28,544,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	7.6	7.6	7.4	7.4	299,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5.1	5.2	5	5.2	1,082,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.28	0.32	0.28	0.32	340,000
House of Investments Inc.	3.1	3.1	3	3	591,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.5	12.5	12.25	12.25	1,346,600
Keppel Holdings	1.98	1.98	1.86	1.9	223,000
Keppel Holdings B	2	2	2	2	20,000
Medco Holdings	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	800,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.57	0.6	0.57	0.59	300,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	7	7.5	6.8	7.5	3,011,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2.36	2.6	2.36	2.46	6,866,000
Pacifica	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	3,800,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	1,500,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.72	0.74	0.72	0.73	560,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	7,200,000
SM Investments Corp.	395	395	390	390	428,170
South China Resources Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	100,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.74	1.74	1.68	1.7	91,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	230,000
Zeus Holdings Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	70,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	17.25	17.25	16.75	16.75	21,097,700
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	20,000
Belle Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.42	1.44	16,158,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.42	1.42	1.4	1.42	1,092,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.8	1.9	1.76	1.8	133,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	2,200,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.95	3.8	3.9	3,030,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2.48	2.48	2.42	2.48	270,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.8	1.84	1.8	1.84	200,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1.82	1.84	1.82	1.84	3,100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	1,000,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.225	0.23	0.22	0.22	950,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.75	0.75	40,780,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	7,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	4,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.74	244,772,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.25	610,000
Interport Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	67,700,000
Interport Res. B	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	10,600,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	5,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	4,530,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.9	0.92	0.89	0.89	7,280,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.024	4,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	3.1	3.25	3.05	3.2	107,056,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5.2	5.5	5	5.2	1,446,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.37	0.4	0.37	0.37	6,570,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.5	210,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	19.75	21.25	19.75	21	6,055,600
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.8	0.82	0.78	0.79	17,940,000
SM Development Corp.	4.05	4.05	3.95	3.95	1,481,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	12.5	12.5	12	12.25	12,118,000
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.66	0.67	0.64	0.64	540,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.115	0.125	0.115	0.12	17,520,000
Zipporah Rlty Hldgs Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	10,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	26	26	24.5	24.5	295,800
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.02	1.06	1.02	1.04	22,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2.02	2.02	1.96	1.96	9,974,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1390	1390	1375	1375	17,680
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	7.1	7.1	6.9	7	3,933,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2615	2615	2595	2595	198,860
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.37	0.39	0.36	0.37	64,480,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	1,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.5	2.55	2.5	2.5	1,031,000
IPVG Corp.	4.95	4.95	4.75	4.75	431,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.38	2.38	2.3	2.3	1,412,000
Philweb Corp.	0.04	0.042	0.039	0.04	601,700,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.05	4.05	4.05	4.05	50,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	26.5	28.5	26.5	27	1,597,500
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.14	328,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.48	2.6	7,953,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	990,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.86	0.87	0.85	0.87	3,790,000
EDUCATION					
iPeople Inc	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	77,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.55	2.6	3,433,000
Paxys Inc.	27	27.5	27	27.5	283,900
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	15,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6	6	5.8	5.8	624,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	6.2	6.2	5.9	5.9	330,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	166,100,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	782,000
Benguet Corp. A	12	12	11.25	11.5	110,600
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.85	2.85	2.7	2.7	51,000
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	1.3	1.38	1.3	1.36	128,919,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	10,820,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	2,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.027	0.026	0.027	871,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.031	0.031	0.03	0.03	548,900,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	312,900,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.05	4.1	4	4.05	5,544,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.5	17.75	18	954,200
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.73	0.74	0.72	0.72	2,050,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.3	1.34	1.28	1.34	3,317,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	3,460,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	464,500,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	100,700,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	499,400,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.75	10.75	10	10.25	167,700

CURRENCIES

February 16, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.760630	1.000000	48.2700
Japan	Yen	0.006382	0.008390	0.4050
United Kingdom	Pound	1.485130	1.952500	94.2472
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097408	0.128062	6.1816
Switzerland	Franc	0.616914	0.810110	39.1040
Canada	Dollar	0.654474	0.860437	41.5333
Singapore	Dollar	0.496009	0.652103	31.4770
Australia	Dollar	0.595965	0.783515	37.8203
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.017693	2.652661	128.0439
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.202823	0.266652	12.8713
Brunei	Dollar	0.494397	0.649984	31.3747
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000111	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.022842	0.030030	1.4495
UAE	Dirham	0.207239	0.272457	13.1515
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.314700	63.4606
Korea	Won	0.000814	0.001070	0.0516
China	Yuan**	0.098076	0.128941	6.2240
Argentina	Peso	0.245562	0.322841	15.5835
Brazil	Real	0.364391	0.479065	23.1245
Denmark	Kroner	0.134159	0.176379	8.5138
India	Rupee	0.017323	0.022774	1.0993
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217634	0.286123	13.8112
Mexico	New Peso	0.069328	0.091145	4.3996
New Zealand	Dollar	0.527044	0.692905	33.4465
South Africa	Rand	0.105621	0.138860	6.7028
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023119	0.030394	1.4671

RP posted $731-M payments surplus in January

Boost from $1-B bond float, BSP's investment earnings

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES POSTED A balance-of-payments surplus of $731 million in January, boosted by the government's $1-billion fresh global bond float and foreign investment inflows, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas announced yesterday.

But this was lower than the $1.92-billion surplus posted in the same month last year when the government embarked on bigger offshore borrowings.

The BSP also reported yesterday that its policy-making Monetary Board cleared on Thursday a $250-million official development assistance from the Asian Development Bank to help the government support structural reforms aimed at improving the investment climate, better managing the country's finances and helping the poor.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world. Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation or debt servicing is a deficit item in the BOP while any which gives rise to a receipt like borrowing, exporting or inward remittance is a surplus item.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the BOP surplus for January was "due to proceeds of national government bond issue, BSP investment income and foreign exchange operations."

The strong inflows since the start of the year have also allowed the BSP to build up its foreign reserves. The sustained BOP surplus for the month reflected the rise in its gross international reserves to a new historic high of $23.76 billion in end-January. This was equivalent to 4.2 times the country's short-term external debt.

The GIR, a key indicator of the country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy, consists of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund.

The country's strong foreign reserve build-up was also supported by remittances from overseas Filipino workers, foreign direct investment and, in recent months, the strong influx of portfolio investments. Meanwhile, the $250-million ADB loan seeks to help the government expand the size of the Philippine economy, cut poverty and create jobs. The loan package matches a similar $250-million development policy loan recently approved by the World Bank.

The new ADB facility seeks to assist in government efforts to undertake key reforms that will bring high and sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and job creation in line with the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan.

The reforms supported by the program are designed to restore fiscal sustainability, maintain economic stability and improve creditworthiness by strengthening tax collection and administration, cutting inefficient spending and strengthening the country's debt management strategy. It will also support the government's anti-corruption initiatives in the revenue-collecting agencies of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs.

The loan will have a 15-year term, including a grace period of three years, with interest determined by the ADB's Libor-based lending facility.

Banks' bad loans ratio at 8-year low

THE BAD LOANS RATIO OF COMMERCIAL banks fell to a new post-Asian crisis low of 6.01 percent of total loans in end-December from 6.9 percent the month before as banks took advantage of the revival of the Special Purpose Vehicle Law to get rid of more soured assets.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday that the yearend non-performing loan (NPL) ratio marked a sharp decline from the 8.21 percent reported in end-2005. It was also the lowest in more than eight years following the 6.61-percent ratio in end-February 1998.

In general, the banking system's stock of bad loans has fallen to an eight-year low after peaking at 18.81 percent in October 2001.

The bulk unloading of bad loans, made possible with Congress' extension of the SPV Law for two more years, slashed the banking sector's non-performing loan burden by 10.45 percent to P125.12 billion in December from a month ago.

The SPV Law waived some of the taxes and reduced fees usually collected in the sale or transfer of assets. It scrapped the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and expanded value-added tax and reduced the registration/transfer fees by 50 percent.

On the other hand, total loan portfolio rose by 2.77 percent to P2.08 trillion over a month ago.

Net of inter-bank loans, the NPL ratio also improved by 0.94 percentage point to 7.46 percent from 8.4 percent in the previous month as regular loans expanded by 0.85 percent.

For the month, restructured loans declined by 8.9 percent to P86.3 billion, of which the soured portion also fell to 45.1 percent from 48.48 percent at end-November.

Similarly, real and other properties owned and acquired (Ropoa) dropped by 3.45 percent in December to P173.9 billion, more than half of which was due to the bulk sale using the SPV framework.

Some P4.42 billion worth of idle property assets were unloaded by the banking sector during the period.

Overall, the sector's non-performing assets—referring to the bad loans and Ropoa combined—eased to 6.53 percent from the previous month's 7.12 percent.

The 6.54-percent drop in bad assets was complemented by the 1.93-percent decline in gross assets.

Meanwhile, the NPL coverage ratio strengthened to 80.21 percent of total loans from the previous month's 78.31 percent. On the other hand, the NPA coverage ratio slightly eased to 40.35 percent from 40.85 percent at end-November. *Doris C. Dumlao*

Peso still rising, now at 48.10 to $1

From page B1

dent Marcelo Ayes.

He said the local currency would likely break into the 47 level against the dollar soon and trade within a range of 47.95 and 48.20:$1.

"Hot money is still coming in," Ayes said, referring to inflows of foreign portfolio investments or money placed in local stocks, bonds and bank products. The PSEi is trading at 10-year highs and is widely expected to test record highs within the year.

Based on BSP data, net inflows of hot money in the first week of February alone had hit $73.2 million. Total inflows during the first five weeks of the year amounted to $1.15 billion, exceeding outflows of about $800 million.

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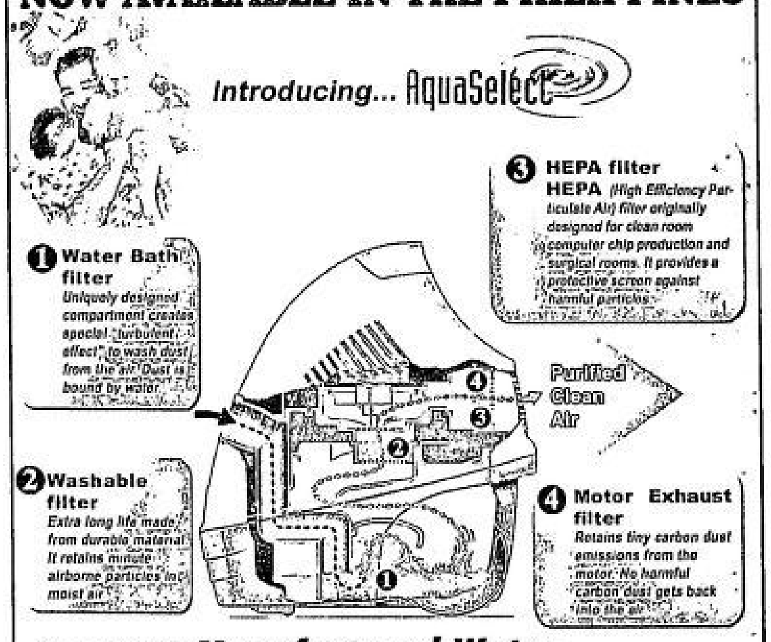
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Republic of the Philippines
TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
East Service Road, South Superhighway, Taguig City

54th TESDA BOARD MEETING
16 January 2007, Tuesday, 3:00 p.m.
7th Floor TESDA Board Room, Office of the Chair
Taguig City

Resolution No. 2007-01

APPROVING THE AMENDMENTS ON THE TRAINING REGULATIONS FOR CAREGIVING NCII

WHEREAS, Board Resolution No. 2003-01 "Approving and Adopting the Training Regulations for the Caregiving" was promulgated by the TESDA Board through the TESDA Board Referendum dated 10 January 2003, and Board Resolution No. 2004-21 "Authorizing the Publication of the Reformatted Training Regulations for Caregiving NCII" during the 44th TESDA Board Meeting which was held last December 9, 2004;

WHEREAS, to support and address the urgency of supplying the demand for workers by employers both in the local and overseas market for caregivers, there is a need to amend Section-4 National Assessment and Certification Arrangements of the said Training Regulations to include assessment of individuals along competencies for specific types of clients;

WHEREAS, the qualifications of the Caregiving NCII may be attained through 1) the demonstration of all units of competency through project-type assessment leading to a full National Certificate (NC), or 2) the accumulation of Certificates of Competency (COCs) in the following areas: a) providing care and support for infants, toddlers and children, and b) providing care and support for the elderly and people with special needs both areas of which will include the household service competencies;

WHEREAS, during the First Joint Standard Setting and Systems Development (SSSD) and Finance TESDA Board and TESDA Secretariat Consultation Meeting held on 15 January 2007, the amendments to the Training Regulations for Caregiving NCII (Section-4 National Assessment and Certification Arrangements to include *assessment of individuals along specific units of Competency (COCs), providing care and support for infants, toddlers and children: providing care and support for elderly and people with special needs; and demonstration of competence through project-type assessment covering all required units of qualification)* were presented and deliberated on;

WHEREAS, during the First Joint Standard Setting and Systems Development (SSSD) and Finance TESDA Board and TESDA Secretariat Consultation Meeting held on 15 January 2007, the committee agreed to recommend the amendments on the Training Regulations for Caregiving NCII;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Board approves the aforementioned amendments to the training regulations, as attached;

BE IT RESOLVED FINALLY, that copies of this Resolution and amendment copies of the Training Regulations (TRs) for Caregiving NCII be published and disseminated to all concerned and shall be effective fifteen (15) days upon its publication. All programs under these amended training regulations must comply with the requirements of the aforementioned TRs. There shall be mandatory national assessment required for graduates of TVET courses covered by this TR.

Adopted this 16th day of January 2007.

(Sgd.) **MA. ADORINDA DE JESUS-FORRO**
Board Secretary VI

Attested by:

(Sgd.) **DR. AUGUSTO BOBOY SYJUCO**
Alternate Chair, TESDA Board
Secretary and Director General
Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

Resolution No. 2007-02

APPROVING THE EXTENSION OF PROVISIONAL ASSESSMENT FEES ON FORTY-FIVE (45) QUALIFICATIONS BASED ON THE PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 2005-18 FOR A PERIOD OF SIX (6) MONTHS SUBJECT TO REVIEW

WHEREAS, Section 8, paragraph 9 of Republic Act No. 7796 or the Technical Education and Skills Development Act of 1994 empowers the TESDA Board to "exact reasonable fees and charges for such tests and training conducted and retain such earnings for its own use, subject to guidelines promulgated by the Authority;"

WHEREAS, in the 46th TESDA Board Meeting held 19 May 2005, the TESDA Board Members approved Board Resolution No. 2005-07 "The Adoption of the Guidelines in the Implementation of the Philippine TVET Qualification and Certification System."

WHEREAS, Section 7 of the Guidelines in the Implementation of the Philippine TVET Qualification and Certification Systems provides that "Assessment fees shall be based on the cost of supplies and materials as well as administrative expenses including Assessor's honoraria, power and utilities, depreciation and maintenance costs. Assessment fees shall be subject to change to allow for any possible adjustments due to costs increases;"

WHEREAS, in the 48th TESDA Board Meeting held 10 November 2005, the TESDA Board Members approved Board Resolution No. 2005-18 "Approving the Provisional Assessment Fees by Qualification"; (45 qualifications) for a period of six (6) months, subject to evaluation of its pilot implementation and submission of its findings and recommendations;

WHEREAS, during the First Joint Standard Setting and Systems Development and Finance TESDA Board-TESDA Secretariat Consultation Meeting held on 15 January 2007, the Members of the SSSD and Finance Committee-TESDA Board favorably endorsed for consideration and approval of the Board, the extension of the provisional assessment fees of forty-five (45) qualifications based on the previously approved Board Resolution No. 2005-18 for a period of six (6) months subject to review;

WHEREAS, in the 54th TESDA Board Meeting held 16 January 2007, the TESDA Board considered and approved the recommendation made by the TESDA Board Members during the First Joint Standard Setting and Systems Development and Finance TB-TS Consultation Meeting last 15 January 2007;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Board approves the extension of the provisional assessment fees of forty-five (45) qualifications based on the previously approved Board Resolution No. 2005-18 for a period of six (6) months subject to review.

BE IT RESOLVED FINALLY, that copy of the resolution shall be disseminated to all concerned

Adopted this 16th day of January 2007.

(Sgd.) **MA. ADORINDA DE JESUS-FORRO**
Board Secretary VI

Attested by:

(Sgd.) **DR. AUGUSTO BOBOY SYJUCO**
Alternate Chair, TESDA Board
Secretary and Director General
Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

Resolution No. 2007-03

APPROVING THE EXACTION OF UNIFORM ASSESSMENT FEE OF ONE THOUSAND PESOS (Php1,000.00) FOR THE REMAINING SIXTY-THREE (63) QUALIFICATIONS FOR A PERIOD OF SIX (6) MONTHS SUBJECT TO REVIEW

WHEREAS, Section 8, paragraph 9 of Republic Act No. 7796 or the Technical Education and Skills Development Act of 1994 empowers the TESDA Board to "exact reasonable fees and charges for such tests and training conducted and retain such earnings for its own use, subject to guidelines promulgated by the Authority;"

WHEREAS, in the 46th TESDA Board Meeting held 19 May 2005, the TESDA Board Members approved Board Resolution No. 2005-07 "The Adoption of the Guidelines in the Implementation of the Philippine TVET Qualification and Certification System;

WHEREAS, Section 7 of the Guidelines in the Implementation of the Philippine TVET Qualification and Certification Systems provides that "Assessment fees shall be based on the cost of supplies and materials as well as administrative expenses including Assessor's honoraria, power and utilities, depreciation and maintenance costs. Assessment Fees shall be subject to change to allow for any possible adjustments due to costs increases;"

WHEREAS, during the First Joint Standard Setting and Systems Development and Finance TESDA Board-TESDA Secretariat Consultation Meeting held on 15 January 2007, the Members of the SSSD and Finance Committee-TESDA Board favorably endorsed for consideration and approval of the Board, the exaction of a uniform assessment fee of One Thousand Pesos (Php1,000.00) for the remaining sixty-three (63) qualifications for a period of six (6) months subject to review.

WHEREAS, the proposed uniform assessment fee shall cover:

1. Assessor's fee	Php 250.00
2. Technical & Administrative Cost (to be remitted to TESDA)	100.00
3. Fixed Cost, etc. (will go to Assessment Center) • *Utilities* • *Supplies and materials* • *Depreciation of tools and equipment* • *Payment to assessment center*	650.00
TOTAL	Php1,000.00

WHEREAS, the six months period for the application of the uniform assessment fee shall commence upon deployment of the assessment tools;

WHEREAS, in the 54th TESDA Board Meeting, 16 January 2007 the TESDA Board considered and approved the recommendation made by the TESDA Board Members during the First Joint Standard Setting and Systems Development and Finance TESDA Board-TESDA Secretariat Consultation Meeting last 15 January 2007;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Board approves the exaction of uniform assessment fee of One Thousand Pesos (Php1,000.00) for the remaining sixty three (63) qualifications for a period of six (6) months subject to review;

BE IT RESOLVED FINALLY, that copy of the resolution shall be disseminated to all concerned

Adopted this 16th day of January 2007.

(Sgd.) **MA. ADORINDA DE JESUS-FORRO**
Board Secretary VI

Attested by:

(Sgd.) **DR. AUGUSTO BOBOY SYJUCO**
Alternate Chair, TESDA Board
Secretary and Director General
Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

TRAINING REGULATIONS COVERED BY THE UNIFORM ASSESSMENT FEES

1. Agricultural Crops NCI
2. Agricultural Crops NCIII
3. Animation NCII
4. Air Duct Servicing NCII
5. Automotive Body Painting/Finishing NCI
6. Automotive Body Painting/Finishing NCIII
7. Automotive Servicing NCI
8. Automotive Servicing NCIII
9. Automotive Servicing NCIV
10. Barangay Health Services NCII
11. Biomedical Equipment NCII
12. Carpentry NCIII
13. Consumer Electronics NCII
14. Consumer Electronics NCIII
15. Consumer Electronics NCIV
16. Construction Painting NCII
17. Construction Painting NCIII
18. Deck Seafaring NCI
19. Deck Seafaring NCII
20. Deck Seafaring NCIII
21. Emergency Medical Services NCII
22. Engine Seafaring NCI
23. Engine Seafaring NCII
24. Engine Seafaring NCIII
25. Fish Capture NCI
26. Fish Capture NCII
27. Flux-Cored Arc Welding NCI
28. Flux-Cored Arc Welding NCII
29. Flux-Cored Arc Welding NCIII
30. Gas Metal Arc Welding NCI
31. Gas Metal Arc Welding NCII
32. Gas Metal Arc Welding NCIII
33. Gas Welding NCI
34. Gas Welding NCII
35. Gas Tungsten Arc Welding NCII
36. Gas Tungsten Arc Welding NCIV
37. Heavy Equipment (Mechanical) NCII
38. Horticulture NCIII
39. Ice Plant Refrigeration Servicing NCIII
40. Instrumentation and Control Servicing NCII
41. Instrumentation and Control Servicing NCIII
42. Instrumentation and Control Servicing NCIV
43. Machining NCI
44. Machining NCIII
45. Masonry NCI
46. Masonry NCIII
47. Massage Therapy NCII
48. Mechatronics Servicing NCII
49. Mechatronics Servicing NCIII
50. Mechatronics Servicing NCIV

TRAINING REGULATIONS COVERED BY UNIFORM ASSESSMENT FEES

51. PC Operations NCII
52. Performing Arts (Dance) NCII
53. Performing Arts (Song) NCII
54. Programming NCIV
55. Plumbing NCI
56. Plumbing NCIII
57. Pyrotechnics NCII
58. Slaughtering Operations NCII
59. Submerged Arc Welding NCI
60. Submerged Arc Welding NCII
61. Welding (SMAW) NCI
62. Welding (SMAW) NCIII
63. Welding (SMAW) NCIV

(PDI–Feb. 13 & 17, 2007)

Coco oil exports seen falling 30%

By Christine A. Gaylican

PHILIPPINE COCONUT OIL EXports are seen falling 30 percent to 750,000 metric tons this year due to the expected decline in coconut production to only 2 million metric tons, according to the Philippine Coconut Authority.

PCA Administrator Oscar Garin said in a briefing yesterday that coconut oil exports was expected to drop this year from 1.07 million MT last year because of the damage caused by last year's super typhoons to the coconut-producing provinces, such as Albay and Sorsogon.

Garin noted that some 200, 000 hectares of coconut plantations were damaged by the series of strong typhoons that pummeled the country in the last four months of 2006.

He said that it would take another two to three years before coconut production can go back p to the annual average of about 2.2 million metric tons.

Typhoon damage also reduced copra output in 2006 by around 10 percent to 980,000 tons, the lowest since a severe El Niño-induced dry spell hit the country in 1998, the United Coconut Associations of the Philippines (Ucap) said in another report.

Copra is dried coconut meat from which coconut oil is extracted.

Lower export volumes available for coconut exports, higher freight costs and the peso's strength against the dollar are also expected to contribute to the drop in exports this year, CIIF Group president and CEO Danilo Coronacion said in an interview.

To meet the local requirements for bio-diesel, Coronacion said it would be more viable for companies to divert volume set aside for export to the domestic market.

Coronacion said that because of increasing freigh costs, it would be more profitable for local exporters of refined and bleached coconut oil to sell to the local market.

The CIIF, the country's biggest exporter of coconut oil, accounts for 35 percent of the country's export volume of about 1 million metric tons a year.

He noted that the approval of the BioFuels Law opened new opportunities for local vegetable oil milling companies.

The CIIF owns five companies engaged in coconut oil milling/ refining: Legaspi Oil Company Inc., San Pablo Manufacturing Corp., Cagayan de Oro Oil Co. Inc., Southern Luzon Coconut Oil Mill Inc. and Granexport Manufacturing Corp.

Doing community work, the Pfizer way

PFIZER employees taking part in the Engage volunteer program volunteer their time to give treats (above) and enhance the reading skills (below) of the less fortunate.

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

CORPORATE CITIZEN

THE CHALLENGING WORK ENVIRONMENT, good compensation package and ideal benefits are not the only reasons why employees of pharmaceutical firm Pfizer Inc. are happy to go to work every day.

Another is the chance workers get to volunteer in any of the health and education programs funded by the multinational company.

Pfizer is so serious about getting its employees actively involved in community work that participation in the employee volunteerism program called Engage is now one of the standards by which it evaluates its employees' performance.

Under Pfizer's evaluation system, employees who volunteer for at least eight hours in an Engage program get a "meets expectations" rating.

Pfizer has even committed to donate P5,000 to a Pfizer-accredited charity chosen by an employee who has spent 24 hours on community work, to further encourage the staff to participate in the Engage program. The commitment goes up to P8,000 for employees who invest at least 50 hours in community work.

Value of community

"We have the Engage program because we believe that the value of community is as important as any of the values we have at Pfizer," said Pfizer human resources director Marian Lleander. "We believe in the interconnectedness of people. Whatever we do in Pfizer affects people outside, and whatever happens outside impacts on every one of us in the Pfizer organization."

But it's not as if the employees need much convincing to lend a hand to the less fortunate.

Pfizer community relations officer Michael Alzona said in an interview that, in a year since the Engage program was institutionalized, the company recorded a 99-percent participation rate—only two of the 212 employees did not volunteer for any program.

Alzona said Engage was conceptualized in 2005 after an in-house survey on employee volunteerism showed that the majority of employees wanted to be more involved in community service.

He said that, while employees knew about the programs Pfizer has been a part of for the past 50 years in the Philippines, they did not feel as much a part of the programs as they felt they should be.

Through Engage, employees now have a menu of corporate programs they can volunteer for based on their personal interests.

"The vision of Engage is for every Pfizer employee in the Philippines to embrace his/her social responsibility, and to live out the value of community through active and sustained involvement in the company's employee volunteerism program," Lleander said.

Program choices

Last year, the Pfizer program concentrated on the health and education of community members of Gawad Kalinga at the Baseco compound in Port Area, Manila.

In education, Pfizer employees may choose from the following:

- Sibol is the values-based education for preschool children. Volunteers give reading sessions, take the children to educational tours and school plays.
- Sagip is a support program for school-aged children. Employees give academic tutorials, arts and crafts lessons, and educational tours.
- Siga is the youth program aimed at addressing juvenile delinquency. Volunteers organize youth camps, sports activities, music and dance sessions, and mentoring.

In health, Pfizer employees get to conduct basic health values education. Volunteers may also establish a baseline database to monitor the health of the GK residents.

Volunteers are provided "Tools of Engagement" when they go to their communities. These include the "My Engage Journal," which lists programs and tips for volunteers; a "My Engage Calendar," where the employee can record their activities; and "Notes of Reflection," where an employee can write notes on how the program has affected him/her and the organization.

Alzona said Pfizer's Engage will continue to focus on education and health, in keeping with Pfizer's corporate values.

"We are now also involving all of our medical representatives," Alzona added. "So for this year, we will go nationwide and engage with more communities."

He said the program was the first of its kind in the Pfizer global community, and other countries are now formulating their own volunteer programs, inspired by Pfizer Philippines' example.

"For many people, we are the answer," Lleander said. "Our medicines promote health. But it is us, the people of Pfizer, who share hope and the promise of a better life to the people who need it."

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Republic of the Philippines
Mindanao Rural Development Project II
Rehabilitation of Farm to Market Road
(Loan)

1. The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has applied a Loan from the World Bank toward the cost of Mindanao Rural Development Project II, and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this Loan, together with the GOP counterpart funds, to payments under the contract for the Rehabilitation of Farm to Market Road.
2. The Municipality of Bayog, implementing partner of the Department of Agriculture, now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the Rehabilitation of Farm to Market Road. Completion of the works is required by Two Hundred Forty (240) days.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act. Subject to exceptions stated in this Bidding Documents, only Bids from Bidders who pass an eligibility check will be opened. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during post-qualification.
4. The documents required in the Eligibility Documents shall be submitted as part of the Technical Documents of the Bidders as provided in the Instructions to Bidders.
5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Mondays to Fridays.
6. A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative on or before March 26, 2007.
7. The Municipality of Bayog will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on March 12, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. at the Municipal Session Hall, Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur.
8. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before March 26, 2007. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in cash, certified (manager's or cashier's) check, bank guarantee and in an amount specified in the bid documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on March 26, 2007 at 1:30 PM. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 1:30 PM, March 26, 2007.
9. The Municipality of Bayog reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **PABLITO A. MATIAS**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee
LGU, Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur
Cell # 09177081461
http://www.zds-bayog.gov.ph
email add: **lgubayogzs@yahoo.com.ph**

(PDI–February 17 & 24, 2007)

PhilHealth urges members to get their PINs soonest

PhilHealth
Your Partner in Health

THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE Corporation (PhilHealth) today called on members and employers to get their PhilHealth Identification Numbers (PINs) and PhilHealth Employer Numbers (PENs) soonest to facilitate transactions with the government agency.

In a recent interview on "Dear PhilHealth" over Radio dzRH, Gregorio C. Rulloda, Vice President for Membership and Contributions Management Group said that the PINs and PENs are intended to "fast track processing of PhilHealth transactions, whether these relate to claims, membership, or contributions." He said that with the implementation of the N-Claims for the Central Office and other Regional Offices, the membership and contributions databases are already connected to the claims database to facilitate eligibility checking. Thus, he said, the PINs and PENs are necessary to significantly reduce transaction time for members and employers.

Rulloda emphasized that there should only be one PIN for each member, otherwise his record will be in disarray, in the same manner that employers must have only one PEN.

"Dito sa National Capital Region, nakita namin na maliit lang ang bilang nung walang PIN. Almost two percent nang nag-a-avail ay wala pang PIN kaya pagka-proseso namin ngayon ng kanilang benepisyo ay binibigyan na namin ng PIN," he said. (more)

The PIN is for lifetime use and need not be changed. PhilHealth advises members and employers that the number should be kept within reach preferably in the cellphone to enable the member to use it anytime the need arises.

At the same time, employers in the private and government sectors to register with the nearest PhilHealth office in their localities for the issuance of their PENs. Employees who have not been issued their PINs yet may coordinate with the Human Resource Departments of their employers so that the appropriate membership registration forms may be processed.

Retirees and pensioners who qualify under the Non-Paying Program are also encouraged to secure their PINs from PhilHealth to ensure hassle-free availment of medical care benefits at any of PhilHealth's over 1,500 accredited facilities nationwide.

Employed members in the National Capital Region who have filled out Form M1a but have not been issued their PhilHealth Number Cards yet may call 637-7680 or 637-6449 for assistance. Similarly, members and employers who have been issued double or multiple PINs or PENs and members who continue to use incorrect PhilHealth numbers are advised to call the above-mentioned numbers or get in touch with any of the 17 PhilHealth Regional and 84 Service Offices nationwide.

RP population now more aware of PhilHealth

MORE AND MORE FILIPINOS ARE NOW AWARE OF THE Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), regardless of their geographical location, socio-economic standing, and gender.

A survey module recently released by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) shows that 96 percent of the 1,200 respondents nationwide were aware of PhilHealth, up from 79 percent in May 2005. The same survey also showed that PhilHealth now enjoys a net satisfaction rating of +56, an improvement from the +52 it posted in 2005.

According to Lorna O. Fajardo, Acting PhilHealth President and CEO, the survey results indicated how widespread public awareness of PhilHealth already is. She attributed this to the strengthened marketing efforts of PhilHealth's offices nationwide, and to the continuing build-up of institutional advocates for the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP).

"Employers, both in the private and public sectors, are among those who have helped make PhilHealth a by-word, through the replacement of 'Medicare' in their employees' payslips to 'PhilHealth'," she said. Fajardo also credited the media, the partner hospitals, doctors and banks as well as all other stakeholders of the NHIP for the growing awareness of the RP population about PhilHealth.

The survey also showed that net satisfaction with the benefits that PhilHealth provides was highest in Mindanao at +62, followed by Balance Luzon (areas in Luzon outside of the NCR) at +57, Visayas at +53 and the National Capital Region at +50. Net satisfaction was higher in rural than in urban areas while the A-B-C classes posted the highest net satisfaction rating at +64 compared to classes D and E at +56 and +55, respectively. There was no marked difference between the net satisfaction ratings among female and male respondents at +58 and +54, respectively.

The module also presented five pre-listed medical benefit options that respondents were asked what they would most prefer in case PhilHealth decides to introduce new benefits. The results revealed that 36 percent of the respondents preferred higher coverage benefits, while another 36 percent preferred the introduction of out-patient benefits. About 15 percent of respondents opted for prescription medicines for out-patient, six percent preferred vaccination and another six percent were for dental benefits.

Preference for higher coverage benefits was highest among those aged 55 and above at 42 percent, followed closely by those in the 35-44 age group at 41 percent, and those in the 45-54 age group at 37 percent. The intermediate youth, or those belonging to the 25 to 34 age group posted 32 percent while the youth group, or those belonging to the 18 to 24 age group, posted 26 percentage points.

By type of employment, preference for higher coverage benefits was highest at 36 percent among those who are working in private enterprises, followed closely by those who are self-employed at 35 percent and those in government at 32 percent. At the same time, 40 percent of those in the private sector preferred out-patient benefits with 37 percent of the self-employed and 35 percent of government workers posting similar preferences.

"Survey results like these serve as a barometer of how we are performing," Fajardo said. "Definitely, we will work harder to improve on our services and benefits so that we remain responsive to the needs of our members."

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From rock icon to healthy living crusader

By Charles E. Buban

BY NOW, THE LOCAL rock world and just about every music lover all over the country must have heard about what happened to Ely Buendia, lead singer-guitarist of the rock band Pupil (although he is readily remembered as the trend-setting frontman of the iconic '90s band, Eraserheads).

In the evening of Jan. 6, the 36-year-old singer-songwriter complained of chest pains right after finishing his show in Laguna.

Afterward, he was rushed to the Asian Hospital and Medical Center in Alabang, Muntinlupa City, where he was diagnosed to have suffered from a heart attack and underwent an emergency angioplasty, a procedure to open narrowed or obstructed blood vessel using a catheter.

Buendia was later transferred to the Philippine Heart Center where he underwent a second angioplasty to clear another blocked artery.

Severely blocked

Buendia's attending physician, Dr. Wilfred Dee, confirmed the heart attack as three of his coronary arteries were blocked, two of which needs reopening or unclogging as it was significantly narrowed by plaque (deposits of fats, cholesterol and other substances).

He explained that coronary arteries are the vessels that directly supply blood to the heart.

"Like the rest of the blood vessels of the body, these arteries can become narrowed or blocked by a gradual buildup of fatty deposits on the artery wall. When these particular arteries become too narrow, blood flow is reduced and the heart doesn't get enough oxygen and is starved. When this happens, the person feels sudden pain in the chest," the doctor explained.

A complete blockage could result in a heart attack, just like what Buendia experienced.

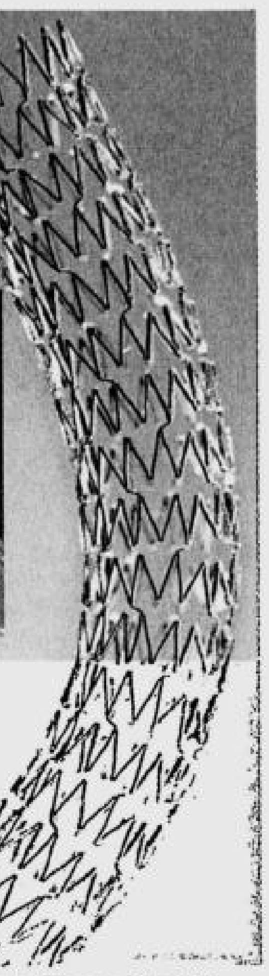
Stent implantation

To save Buendia, Dee said he has to perform coronary stent implantation on two of his blocked arteries.

The operation involved inserting a stent—small expandable wire-mesh tube—into two of the diseased sections of Buendia's artery.

"This is done by passing a long, thin tube (called a catheter) from the groin area where it travels along the artery going to the heart. When the catheter reaches the affected blood vessel, the balloon located at the tip of the catheter is inflated together with the stent. Once the stent has expanded and locked into place, the balloon is then deflated. The stent remains in place as the catheter is withdrawn and taken out of the body," Dee explained.

BUENDIA wants to remind his fellow youth about the dangers of having an unhealthy lifestyle.



STENTS similar to this one is now in place in two of the arteries supplying Buendia's heart.

The doctor also informed that the two stents placed on Buendia's arteries are special.

Renarrowing

"With conventional stenting, renarrowing of arteries may occur in as many as one in three stent implants. This is because stents may trigger swelling and excessive growth of the tissue in the inner lining of the artery wall causing another narrowing or even blockade," he said.

Those implanted in Buendia's arteries are called Cypher Sirolimus-eluting stent, a type of stent coated with the drug sirolimus. The drug is released over a period of 30 to 90 days to prevent the development of scars that could renarrow the artery.

Moreover, a natural lining grows over the stent to prevent complications such as blood clotting.

With these drug-eluting stents, Dee believes that more patients will now be encouraged to undergo coronary stenting than open-heart surgery, which should be reserved for more serious cases of blockades.

"Deciding on which of the two types of procedures to be done depends on the patient's condition although using stents is generally much less invasive, less traumatic, and recovery is also a lot quicker," Dee explained.

Lifestyle plays a role

Buendia admitted that his lifestyle must have played a role in his recent heart attack.

"While he doesn't drink or smoke, he is always exposed to a venue where so many people smoke (making him a secondhand smoker). Because of his work, he also gets very little sleep, always traveling, and is not particular with the food he eats," his wife Diane said.

Buendia added that three of his uncles died of heart attack, making him more at risk for the disease that kills 17 million a year throughout the world.

"Now that he is lucky to have survived the heart attack, he has to do a lot of adjustments in his lifestyle," Dee said.

In 2 months

While his doctor said Buendia could go back to his singing in two months, he has to make some changes on his calendar so he could rest more and get more sleep, as well as choose his food more carefully (which means less of the fatty and salty kind and more on vegetables).

"I guess I now have to wear a surgical mask while performing (to keep him from inhaling the smoke). Who knows, I could set a new fashion trend," he joked.

But more than setting a trend, Buendia believes he is now in a position to remind his peers and fans about practicing healthy lifestyle and the consequences if ignored.

And just like how he influenced a generation of young people, Buendia is now planning on his next steps: "This recent heart attack taught me a lot, it made me contemplate on things I haven't considered before. Expect me do hold shows or do campaigns that educate or at least remind people," he promised.

Ateneo Grade School Math Olympiad

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

NOW ON ITS FIFTH YEAR, THE ATENEO Math Olympiad (AMO) is going strong. Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, SJ, Ateneo president and mathematician, envisioned to be a venue for training our most talented youth to tackle rigorous nonroutine math problems. Last week, more than 80 participants who have undergone training either by Ateneo college coaches or by the Math Trainers Guild (MTG) competed in two rounds: an individual event patterned after the International Math Olympiad, and a group event which is similar to local competitions, such as the Dep Ed-Metrobank-Math Teachers Association of the Philippines Math Challenge.

In the individual round, students are given three hours to solve three problems. For instance, Grades 6 and 7 students were asked to solve this problem: Mrs. Cruz drives to the station each day to pick up her husband, who usually arrives on a train at 5 o' clock. Last Monday, Mr. Cruz finished work earlier, caught an earlier train and arrived at the station at 4 o' clock. He started to walk home and eventually met Mrs. Cruz who drove him the rest of the way, getting there 20 minutes earlier than usual. On Tuesday, he again finished early and found himself at the station at 4:30. Again, he began to walk home, again he met Mrs. Cruz, who drove him the rest of the way home. How much earlier than the usual time did they arrive home?

Students were scored based not only on the correctness of the answer, but on the creativity, clarity and elegance of their solutions. There were no gold medallists this year, but silver medallists were Carmela Antonette Lao (St. Jude Catholic School), John Patrick Poache (Ateneo de Manila Grade School), Henry Jefferson Morco (Chiang Kai Shek College) and Niel Benjamin Kho (San Beda College, Alabang). Bronze medalists were Vance Eldric Go (St. Jude), Roger Jose Frogoso (Ateneo) and Jeo Cosunji (Ateneo).

Group competition

In the group round, students were given 15 seconds to answer easy questions, 30 seconds for moderate questions and 60 seconds for difficult questions. They were also given a challenge problem to solve in 15 minutes.

Sample questions are:

1. (Easy) Bacteria in a dish double the area they cover every day. If the dish is covered after 32 days, on what day was only one quarter of it covered?

Answer: Day 30

2. (Easy) The length of a rectangle is three times as long as its width. If the rectangle were four meters shorter and four meters wider, then it would be a square. What are the dimensions of the rectangle?

Answer: 12 meters by 4 meters

3. (Moderate) Two friends Pedro and Sammy have pocket money in the ratio 3:5. After each one spends 30 pesos, the ratio changes to 1:2. What is the total amount of pocket money the two friends started off with?

Answer: 240 pesos

4. (Moderate) If a number is chosen from the set of natural numbers up to 13, what is the probability that it is a prime number?

Answer: 6/13

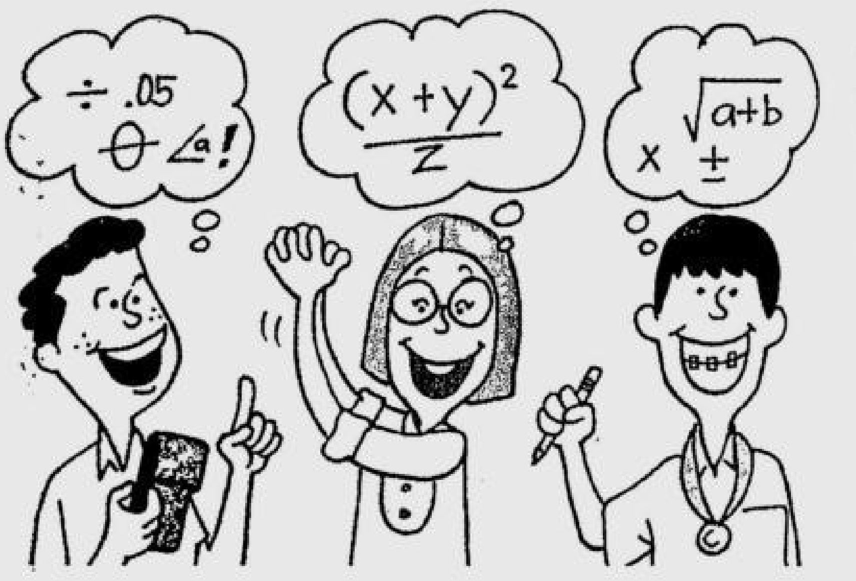
5. (Difficult) Ana and Maria have the same grade average before the final exam. The final exam is counted as 25 percent of the semester grade. Ana got 6 percentage points higher than Maria on her semester grade, and the final exam was worth 100 points. What is the number of points in the difference between their final exam grades?

Answer: 24 points

Winners

For the group round, first place went to Carmela Antonette Lao, with Ateneo groupmates Armando Jose Castelo, Julian Buban and Miguel Roberto Bengzon. Second placers were Vance Eldric Go, with Ateneo groupmates Joaquin Noel Mendoza, Jose Antonio Garrido and Anthony Aguilar. In third place were Henry Morco, with Ateneo groupmates Gianmarco Miguel Dayrit, Martin Felipe Diaz and Gabriel Reyes.

On behalf of Father Nebres, I would like to thank the Ateneo Math Society, the grade school math administration and faculty, the Ateneo College Math department, the Ateneo Problem Solvers Group and Scholastic Philippines for their support of this project. To the winners and coaches, congratulations!



LMOs for general consumption

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

WITH BUZZWORDS SUCH AS "ORGANIC," "free-range" and "environment-friendly" filling supermarket aisles and advertisements, not to mention movie theaters, people have become more conscious of where their food comes from. Last weekend alone, aside from the full page summary of the recently concluded environmental conference, two stories appeared in the INQUIRER regarding the possibility of genetically modified rice being grown and sold in the Philippines. The notion of producing what the Japanese have termed "living modified organisms" or LMOs for public consumption still makes the public uncomfortable, partially because the science behind these developments isn't yet fully understood.

One important breakthrough happened right at the end of 2006, when researchers from the United States Department of Agriculture announced that they had developed cattle that lacked the prion protein. The news was significant as misfolded prions are responsible for illnesses such as the neurodegenerative Creutzfeld-Jacob disease (CJD)—better known as mad cow disease. CJD leaves victims in a coma-like state, unable to function. Fear of contracting CJD led to a sharp decline in beef consumption in Britain and other countries for several years.

Prion development

According to Jürgen Richt and his colleagues, whose work appeared on the journal Nature Biotechnology's website last Dec. 31, the nearly 2-year-old prion-free cattle they'd raised were "clinically, physiologically…immunologically and reproductively normal." At the moment Richt et al. plan to use the prion-free cattle to further study prion development. However, given the promise of eating beef without the risk of such a debilitating disease, it is hard to ignore the possibility that these prion-free cattle may one day be available for public consumption.

If prion-free beef does make it onto American shelves, the current climate toward LMOs does not suggest it will be a very popular product. An article in The Washington Post just prior the publication of Richt et al.'s paper notes that the public wants the United States' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to strictly regulate the production and marketing of genetically modified food.

Products' safety

According to the article, the FDA had asked farmers several years ago to voluntarily withhold selling genetically modified livestock pending a review of such products' safety, some had become impatient and had already done so. This echoes Sunday's news in the INQUIRER that some genetically modified rice (apparently not from strains developed by the international Rice Research Institute) might already be sold here in the Philippines.

It seems apt then that the day after the release of Richt et al.'s paper, the journal Theriogenology published several papers from Canada, the United States and Japan regarding these countries' regulations on LMOs, some of which discuss possibly selling and eating such products. These papers are the result of an international conference held last Dec. 15 regarding LMOs and the Cartagena protocol.

International accord

The Cartagena protocol on Biosafety was an international accord (ratified by 134 countries as of July 2006) that came into effect in January 2000 following the Convention on Biological Diversity. Specifically the protocol discusses the effect of LMOs such as plants and animals on the "natural" environment. The questions each country has had to answer include: "Should genetically modified organisms be raised here (country)?" "Can these transgenes move from one organism to another?" "What impact would the transgenes have on 'natural' plants and animals?"

While no one country has established a policy that is likely to please all its constituents, the approach each has decided upon is worth looking at. Succeeding columns will focus on stances of several countries—specifically the United States, Canada, Japan and the Philippines—on LMOs with regard to the Cartagena protocol.

Mindanao town to bring infant mortality rate down to 0

THE WOMENFOLK OF THE fourth-class municipality of Socorro, Surigao del Norte put their mayor, health workers and a volunteer doctor—all working under a unique health program—on a pedestal.

They have a compelling reason to do it. These men and women that they admire the most have toiled hard and long to bring down infant deaths in their town from 62 per 1,000 live births in 2004 to zero in 2006. And, as of this writing, they're keeping the no infant death record spotless.

A story worth telling

How Socorro Mayor Mamerto Galanida, 65, the town's two nurses and six midwives and Pauline Convocar—a volunteer doctor dispatched by the Leaders for Health Program (LHP)—did it is a story worth telling and retelling so it may inspire other municipalities in the remotest parts of the country.

A project of the Department of Health, the Ateneo Graduate School of Business and Pfizer Inc., the LHP sends physicians to doctorless or medically underserved areas to finally develop future health managers by training local government and community leaders in health care management. As an incentive, the doctor receives a master's degree in community health care management from Ateneo at the end of his four-year volunteer service.

The program started with 20 doctors in the pilot areas in the Visayas and Mindanao in August 2002, and raised the coverage to 39 municipalities in 2004, the year it sent Dr. Convocar to Socorro which has a population of 20,000.

Strengthen rural health unit

By that time, Mayor Galanida, a noted educator, said he was already implementing measures to strengthen the town's rural health unit (RHU) so it can deliver better and faster health care services to the people. "Until Dr. Convocar's arrival, Socorro was without a doctor for six straight years. She was a blessing for my town so we couldn't thank the organizers of the Leaders for Health Program enough."

The mayor said his people quickly warmed up to Dr. Convocar who proved to be, in his own words, a fast, tireless and competent worker. "I would say she greatly helped in raising the health consciousness of my constituents. We gave her 100 percent support; we rallied the barangays and 33 other people's organizations behind her."

Getting such solid support, the doctor, according to Mayor Galanida, had encountered no problems in carrying out her health information campaigns in the town's 14 barangays, one of the LHP's major thrusts since it is principally geared at preventive health care. The mayor also proved to be a big help as he is adept at getting messages and information across effectively.

"We'd make regular visits to the barangays and educate them on how diseases can be prevented," he said. "We especially targeted pregnant women and Dr. Convocar would advise them on the proper care of themselves and, later, of their babies. That was the main reason we were able to prevent infant deaths last year."

Heightened awareness

Mayor Galanida said the heightened awareness of his constituents of health as a way of life has also led to, among other things, getting 88 percent of Socorro's total of 4,000 households to have their own toilets.

In 2005, one year after the LHP came to Socorro, the municipality joined the DoH's "Sentrong Sigla," a list of towns which the department considers to have had an effective health care delivery system.

Having been an educator for most of his life, it was understandable that when he began his mayoral term, he gave education the biggest budget. His active involvement in the LHP, he said, changed his perception. Of the town's P25-million budget this year, the biggest slice goes to health followed by education. Where a town of Socorro's population would be adequately served by one nurse, he employs two. Where four midwives would suffice, he has six—and three casual drivers for the mobility of his health workers.

"Health is wealth," he intoned. "Education will be most effective if the children you're teaching have healthy bodies.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s.

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
STC SOLUTIONS INC. – PHIL. BRANCH PeopleSupport Center, Ayala cor. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Donald Joseph Waskiewicz Jr.	Collections Manager
AMBERGRIS SOLUTIONS PHILIPPINES, INC. 31/F ADB Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Amerigo Opaleo De Vera	Manager Contact Center
SERVICIO.COM INC. 8/F Pearl Condominium, Pearl Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Marcus Patrick Womack	Chief Executive Officer
KINO CONSUMER PHILIPPINES, INC. Unit 304, 3rd Flr., La Fuerza Plaza, 2241 Chino Roces Ave., Makati City	Lukas Nugroho Yuwono	Finance Controller
CHAE YOGA MEDITATION SERVICES INC. Unit 1204, City & Land Megaplaza, Ortigas Ctr., Pasig City	Jong Mi Lee	Senior Consultant

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI – February 17, 2007)

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- * Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
- * Mindanao Rural Development Project II

B4

PHILIPPINE CARABAO CENTER
Department of Agriculture
ISO 9001: 2000 CERTIFIED

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Carabao Center, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, invites suppliers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following:

	Particulars	Approved Budget
Package I.	3 units Light Duty Truck	P2,940,000.00
Package II.	Laboratory Equipment	2,910,000.00

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	February 19-23, 2007
2. Pre-bid Conference (PCC Headquarters and Gene Pool)	March 5, 2007 (2:00 p.m.)
3. Opening of Bids (PCC Headquarters and Gene Pool)	March 19, 2007 (2:00 p.m.)
4. Bid Evaluation	March 20-23, 2007
5. Post-qualification	March 26-30, 2007
6. Notice of Award	10 calendar days

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of one thousand pesos (P1,000.00) to the Philippine Carabao Center Cashier.

The Philippine Carabao Center assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **EULOGIO M. MONTEALTO**
BAC Chairman

(PDI – Feb. 17, 2007)

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> Must be knowledgeable in accounting and human resources

For inquiries or submission of resume, contact the following:
Able Advertising Agency
Unit 8 Bohol Mansion, # 43 Sgt Esquerra St., Quezon City
Phone: (02) 413.66.25 / (082) 228.60.20 / able.ad.agency@gmail.com
Or submit to security guard of Port Royal Building, Rada St., Makati City

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2000 Nissan Sentra / WPY-428

For particulars, call Philam Ins. Co., Inc./ Dick Cariño. Tel. # 878-54-57

(PDI–February 17, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

I. **Graft Investigation and Prosecution Officer I - SG 26** (3 positions)
  a. General Investigation Bureau - B
     Item No. OMBA-GIO1-5-2004
  b. General Investigation Bureau - C
     Item No. OMBA-GIO1-56-1998
  c. Assets Investigation Bureau
     Item No. OMBA-GIO1-7-2004

Education: Bachelor of Laws; **Experience:** Three (3) years of experience in the practice of law, counseling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related works; **Training:** 24 hours of relevant training; **Eligibility:** RA 1080 (BAR)

II. **Associate Graft Investigation Officer II** (27 positions)
  a. General Investigation Bureau - B
     Item Nos. OMBA-AGIO2-58-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-60-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-62-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-63-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-67-2004 and OMBA-AGIO2-72-2004;
  b. General Investigation Bureau - C
     Item Nos. OMBA-AGIO2-59-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-61-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-64-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-65-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-66-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-69-2004 and OMBA-AGIO2-70-2004;
  c. Assets Investigation Bureau
     Item Nos. OMBA-AGIO2-42-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-43-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-44-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-48-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-53-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-54-2004 and OMBA-AGIO2-71-2004;
  d. Intelligence Bureau
     Item Nos. OMBA-AGIO2-45-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-46-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-47-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-49-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-50-2004, OMBA-AGIO2-51-2004 and OMBA-AGIO2-52-2004.

Education: Bachelor of Laws; **Experience:** 6 months of experience in conducting community work, systems studies/analyses, counseling, investigation or other related work; **Training:** 8 hours of relevant training; **Eligibility:** RA 1080 (BAR)

OR

Education: Bachelor's degree relevant to the job; **Experience:** 1 year of experience in conducting community work, systems studies/analyses, counseling, investigation or other related work; **Training:** 8 hours of relevant training; **Eligibility:** Career Service Professional/Second Level Eligibility

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resources Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1"x1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) * Certificates of Seminars/Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable);
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

Republic of the Philippines
SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION
Makati City

NENITA LIBRADO ANGELES,
Petitioner,
-versus-
CELESTINO LIBRADO,
Respondent,
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM,
Intervenor.
x------------------------------------x

SSC Case No. 9-17204-06

SUMMONS

MR. CELESTINO LIBRADO

GREETINGS:

You are hereby required to file within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this Summons with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission, 12th Floor, SSS (Makati) Building, 6782 Ayala Avenue corner Rufino (formerly Herrera) Street, Makati City, your Answer to the Petition filed by petitioner Nenita Librado-Angeles for benefits accruing from the death of SSS member Zoilo Librado.

You are further required to **serve a copy of your Answer upon the petitioner** through her counsel, Atty. Geraldine Sabellano, Public Attorney's Office, Ground Floor, Hall of Justice, 2228 F. Zobel Street, Makati City and upon the SSS through its counsel, Atty. Judd E.P. Provido, 11th Floor, CLU-NCR North Cluster, SSS Bldg., Diliman, Quezon City.

If you fail to answer within the time prescribed above, the Hearing Commissioner may, upon motion of the petitioner or *motu-proprio*, declare you in default and shall forthwith proceed to receive the petitioner's evidence *ex-parte* and thereafter recommend to the Commission either the granting or denial of the petition as the evidence may warrant.

SO ORDERED.

Makati City, Philippines, **February 9, 2007.**

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION

(PDI - Feb. 17, 2007)

OBITUARIES

Death Notice

ROMULO R. REBANCOS

"Mholly"

September 10, 1948 - February 15, 2007

Peacefully joined his Creator on February 15, 2007 at the age of 58.

His body lies in state at Loyola Memorial Chapel, Marikina City.

Cremation will be on Sunday, February 18, 2007, 1:00 p.m. at Loyola Crematorium, Marikina City.

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†

We wish to express our profound gratitude, to you who in so many ways condoled, helped and comforted us during our time of bereavement.

from the family of

Felixberto C. Sta. Maria

1922-2006

LUIS "JING" MALLARI ALANDY III

peacefully joined his Creator on February 11, 2007 at the age of 61.

His children **Gigi & Tony, Malou, Addison & Lhiza, Allan & Leovy, Hannah, Ernie, May, Monique** & his grandchildren together with his siblings **Baby & Boy Nable & Jr.** request the pious readers to join them in prayers for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation today at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City at 5:00 p.m.

Bienvenida "Bening" Ligutan

Died in the Grace of our Lord on February 7, 2007 at the age of 67 in Sydney, Australia.

Her loving family, other relatives and friends request readers to pray for the eternal repose and happiness of her soul.

Her body lies in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, 12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Tuesday, the 20th of February 2007 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City following the 2:30 p.m. Mass at the Sacred Heart Parish Church in Kamuning, Quezon City.

Board Member MANOLO M. MALOLES Jr.

(September 28, 1956 – February 11, 2007)

His loving wife **Gigi**; loving children **Shary & Crystal**; brothers & sisters **Bayani, Neneng, Linda, Nitz, Warren & Lebie, Adoy & Laila, Veck & Jessie, Bobby & Joy**; nephews and nieces request the pious readers to join them in prayers for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His remains lie in state at Brgy. San Fernando, Sto. Tomas, Batangas.

Interment will be tomorrow, February 18, 2007 at 9:30 a.m., San Joaquin Municipal Cemetery.

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Nation-Building through Education

PCCI prepares 23 areas for free trade

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE and Industry yesterday said it had completed studies on 23 sectors of the economy to be covered by free trade talks.

PCCI chair Donald G. Dee said in a briefing yesterday that the studies were made by the group's think tank, called Universal Access to Competitiveness and Trade or U-ACT, in preparation for a meeting with the head of the World Trade Organization next week.

The studies were aimed at assessing the readiness of 23 industries to further trade liberalization under the WTO's Doha Development Agenda (DDA).

"[The study] would empower all of us in responding to the bottom line of all trade agreements—the costs and benefits to our businesses and our consumers," Dee said.

The 23 sectors include ICT-based business and labor; jewelry and watches; mining; fruits and vegetables; education, medical and health; finance; fishery and fishery products; basic metal; chemicals; coconut; construction; corn, feeds and livestock, and nonelectronic machinery and equipment.

Also included are wood; ornamentals, rubber and fiber; sugar; tannery, leather; textile, wearing apparel; tourism; transportation, communications and utilities; wholesale and retail; metals and metal products, and electrical machinery and equipment.

Dee explained that the studies were meant to find out which sectors would be winners and losers in an environment of further trade liberalization; what support is needed for these sectors; what such support would cost, and whether such support is worth the cost.

Also, Dee said the initiative was part of efforts "to reaffirm the active role of businesses in trade negotiations rather than being just a bystander or watchdog."

PCCI officials and members are set to meet with WTO director general Pascal Lamy on Feb. 23.

Lamy is expected to apprise the business community on key developments leading to the resumption of the stalled Doha Development Round of trade talks.

More tobacco planted in Ilocos

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

CANDON CITY—MORE AREAS IN THE Ilocos region were planted with Virginia tobacco during the last cropping season, according to the National Tobacco Administration.

The NTA said 6,996.64 hectares were planted with Virginia tobacco as of January this year in the second district of Ilocos Sur, the biggest producer in the country.

Only 4,875 has. were planted with tobacco in the same period last year because sudden rainfall disrupted the farmers' planting cycle and caused heavy losses.

La Union planted tobacco on 3,000 hectares this year, followed by Ilocos Sur's first district, which set aside 2,000 hectares. The Ilocos provinces supply 80 percent of Virginia tobacco in the country.

The NTA said some tobacco farmers shifted to corn planting this year.

Caesario Gapatan, barangay captain of Bagani Togco here, said many tobacco farmers decided to cultivate tobacco despite the experience with bad weather last year on expectations that prices would increase.

He said he lost about P50,000 due to the rains last year.

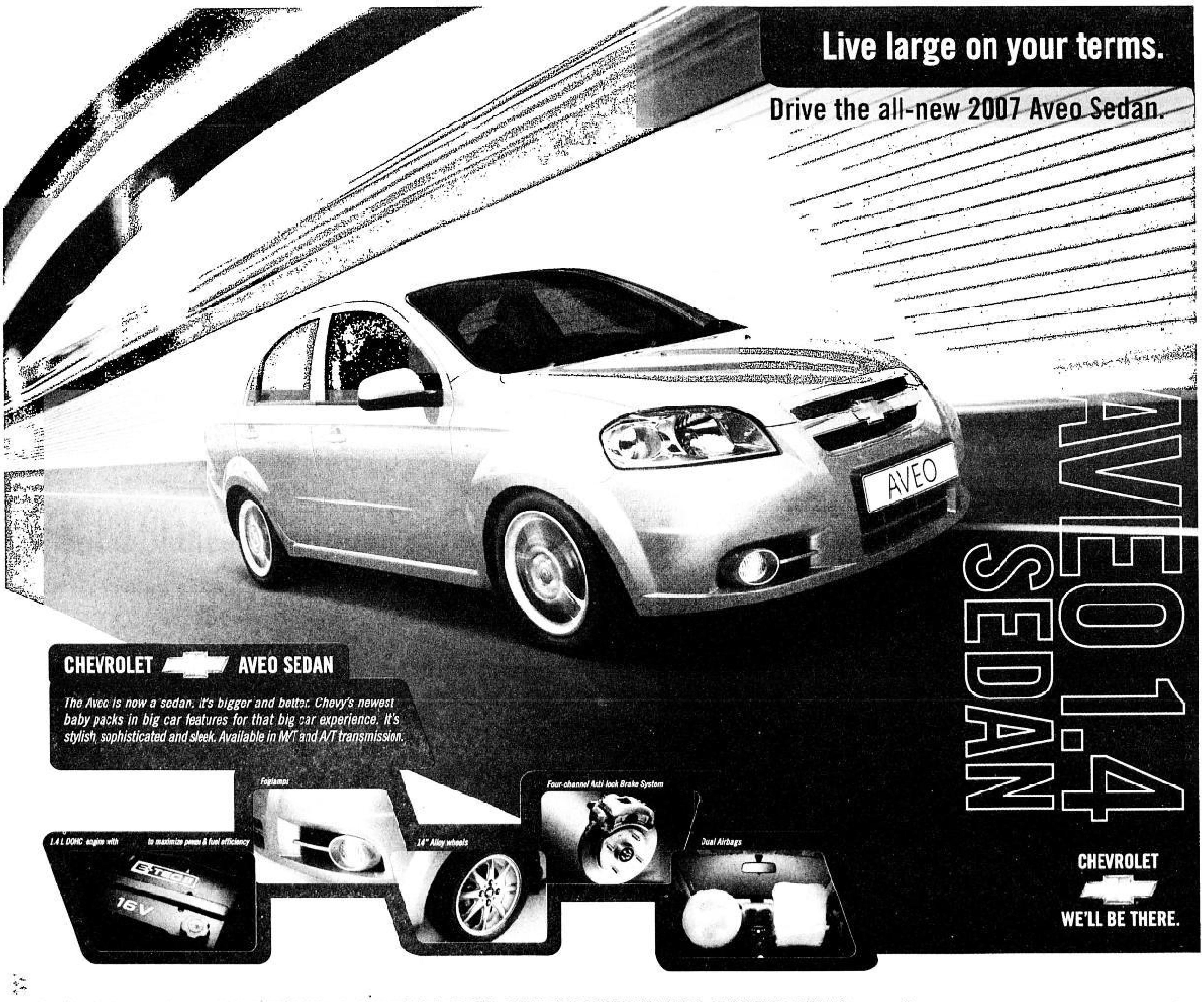
"I don't want to jinx myself but we're looking forward to an excellent crop this season," said Chris Nelson, country manager of Philip Morris Philippines Inc.

Philip Morris had to import tobacco last year to cover for the local supply shortage, but Nelson said he hoped to lessen imports this year.

"It was heartbreaking. We had heavy rains in Ilocos when it should not happen. The [tobacco] plants drowned and the resulting leaves were no longer usable," Nelson said.

"Prime Isabela burley [tobacco] was also destroyed when Magat Dam had to release water and flood all the farms," he said.

Both Philip Morris and Fortune Tobacco had to import tobacco from China, the United States and South Africa because of crop losses last year, the firms' officials said.



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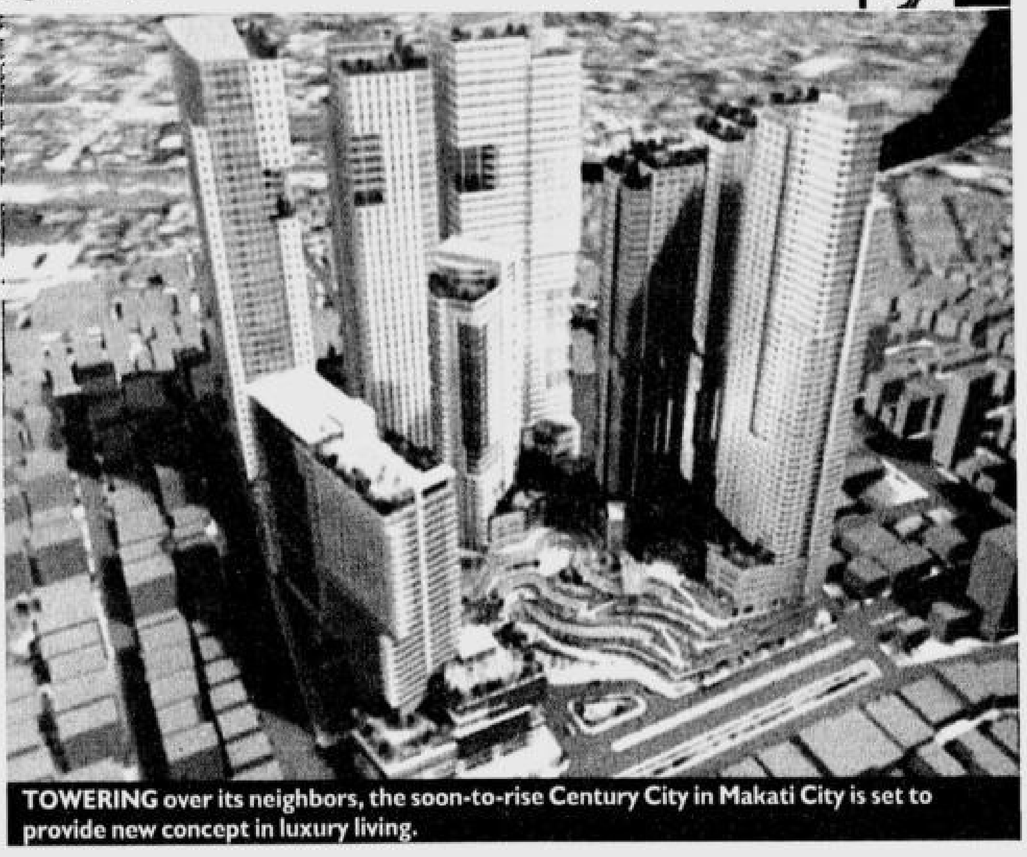
PROPERTY

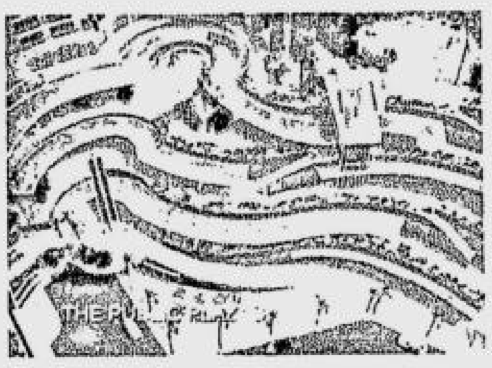
A new landmark to rise in Makati



TOWERING over its neighbors, the soon-to-rise Century City in Makati City is set to provide new concept in luxury living.

By Charles E. Buban

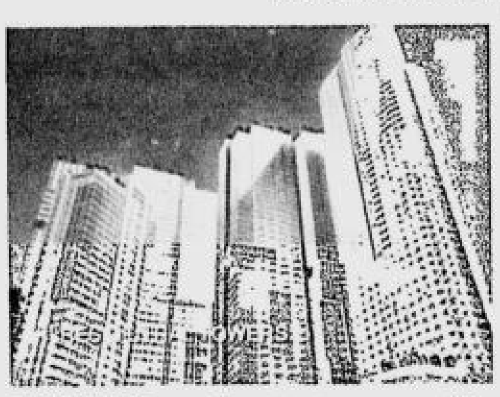
MOTORISTS PASSING BY Kalayaan Avenue in Makati City would definitely notice the activity going on the left side of the road right before reaching Makati Avenue.



CURVING "canyons" and terraces will highlight the public plazas of Century City.

The area, formerly the site of the International School Manila, is now being transformed by property developer Century Properties Inc. whom the Privatization and Management Office (which handles the marketing of government assets set for privatization) awarded after offering a purchase price of P1.432 billion for the development of the 4.8-hectare property.

"With a 20-year heritage of visionary real estate, Century Properties envisions a completely new urban experience to rise on the site. Century City, as this development will be called, will be a mixed-use development where residential, office, hotel, retail and open space will be integrated," Century Properties COO John Victor Antonio explained.



CENTURY Properties is set to introduce new concept to Century City's residential towers.

Self-contained

He added that the development will be a self-contained haven where one could live, work and play.

Masterplanned by the world renowned architectural and urban design firm, Jerde Partnership International, Century City will feature an IT park, which will be bannered by a number of call centers, a five-star hotel, several residential towers that would introduce another first in the real estate industry, and retail stores that offer only top brands.

"The Century City will have the first mixed-used design that Jerde Partnership will do in the Philippines. Interestingly, this is the same firm behind projects like Universal Citywalk in Los Angeles, the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics site, Roppongi Hills in Tokyo and Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas," Century Properties managing director Jose Marco Antonio said.

Catalyst

Indeed, in Europe, Asia, Australia and North America, billion dollar plus Jerde Partnership projects have served as a catalysts for urban transformation. The same is expected with the Century City to its immediate environs.

"Just like how people marvel at the creations of Jerde Partnership around the world, Century City will likewise be a sight to behold," Antonio assured.

Overall, the development is designed with a variety of users, residents and visitors in mind.

Residents can benefit from the nearby retail, entertainment, food and beverage establishments. On the other hand, the hotel will offer access to spa facilities and meeting rooms while its guests will no longer have to leave the premises for access to retail outlets and restaurants.

24-hour offices

Employees of the 24-hour functioning offices will head to the bars and restaurants at various hours while the open spaces will provide other meeting areas.

Antonio added that the central retail portion of the development will offer indoor as well as outdoor retail establishments.

The indoor portion will have a three-story covered arcade that is designed as a curving "canyon," circulating between the two main entrances of the development.

The outdoor portion, on the other hand, will feature stepping terraces oriented toward the south and the views of the Makati central business district.

"Indeed, it will be a different experience. As we have shown in our past and current projects like the South of Market at the Fort, Grand Soho Makati in Buendia Avenue, Soho Central in Mandaluyong City and the Canyon Ranch in Carmona, Cavite, Century Properties will again set a new trend in property development, one that will truly excite the market," Antonio promised.

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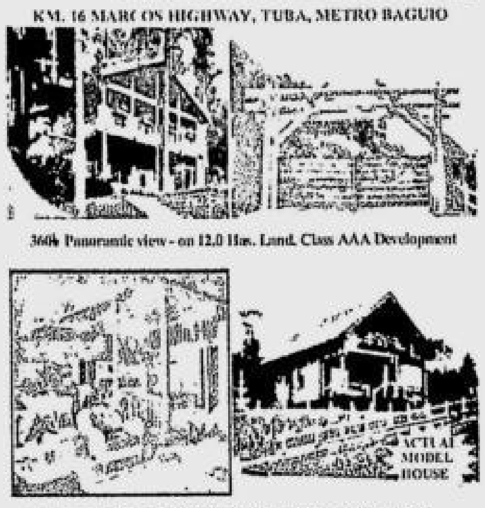

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Pacific Star now an IT building

THE PACIFIC STAR BUILDING Condominium Corp. through its duly appointed property manager, Century Properties Management Inc. announced that it has officially obtained Malacañang's Presidential Proclamation 1190.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) director general Lilia B. De Lima, informed PSBCC president Jose E.B. Antonio in a letter that President Arroyo has issued Presidential Proclamation 1190, "creating and designating the Pacific Star Building at Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue corner Makati Avenue, Makati City, as information technology center, pursuant to Republic Act 8748."

Full support

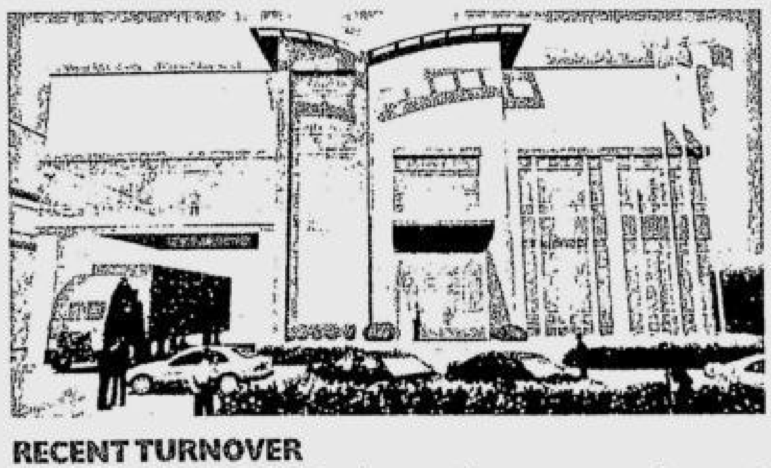
De Lima also expressed Peza's full support and assistance in the successful operation of Pacific Star now as an IT building. However, she stressed that PSBCC's cooperation is critical in this effort to make doing business in the country as easy as possible to attract more foreign investments in the IT industry and therefore enjoins the Pacific Star Building Condominium Corp. as they do with all other IT developers, to maintain competitive rental rates for all prospective IT locators.

Pacific Star Building is one of the most prestigious office landmarks in the Makati CBD, consisting of two building structures—the high-rise building with 28 stories and a rooftop/helipad, and the 5-story low-rise building with a roof deck.

Ideal for call centers

Pacific Star has floor plates of 1,830.30 square meters of usable space, ideal for call centers and other BPOs, with the latest communications facilities, such as rooftop antennas as its international gateway with satellite disk; two air-conditioned communication room and UPS, equipped with riser cables with individual hubs per floor for ready Internet access both LAN and WAN that can accommodate around 50 lines per floor; wireless Internet communications, PABX system and pico cell sites around the building.

The building has a Food Court Plaza with various food locators, restaurants and coffee shops and other retail outlets, and four basement parking levels.



RECENT TURNOVER
Owner and developer EZP Development Corp. announces the recent turnover of its latest project located inside the Calamba Premiere Industrial Park in Laguna. The warehouse, designed by architect Eric Belarmino, is part of a 14-warehouse project that EZP is developing for client-firms that want to operate in areas covered by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

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5 success factors of energy-efficient buildings

(Conclusion)

GREEN ARCHITRENDS

Amado de Jesus

ENERGY EFFICIENCY CAN BE successfully attained when the following vital elements are in place:

1. Top management involvement and support
2. Proper building design
3. Energy management system
4. Consistent and continuous improvement program
5. Involvement of the staff and building occupants

The previous article dealt with the first three factors while this one will focus on the 4th and 5th factors.

Improvement program

For many existing buildings, especially in the business districts of Metro Manila, improvement means visual improvements. For many it means a thorough face-lifting program to keep the building up-to-date with the latest in design and material finishes.

While this may be a good marketing strategy to lure more tenants, a more effective and practical method is by adopting not only visually-satisfying designs but also energy-efficient improvements so that the monthly electricity bills of office spaces are drastically reduced and building occupants are more comfortable.

A case in point is the retrofit done by the 35-year-old Makati Stock Exchange on Ayala Avenue in Makati, the second runner-up in last year's Asean Energy Awards. Continuous improvements such as upgrading of the air-conditioning system, cooling towers, motors, lighting, building management system and the implementation of energy efficiency and conservation programs resulted in an annual savings in energy of about 30.43 percent (way above the Asean Energy Awards benchmark of 20 percent energy savings).

This achievement should serve as a role model for many aged buildings in our metropolis. Extending the life of buildings by retrofitting them and making them more energy efficient is definitely a green building option. It means extending the life of the building, thus delaying the use of more virgin materials and resources not to mention the accumulation of construction debris that ends up in overcrowded landfills.

Another way to go about improving the energy efficiency of a building is through the so-called Total Building Performance Approach, a system that was effectively used by One George Street Building in Singapore, last year's winner in the Asean Energy Awards. The system coordinates the different uses of the building to ensure that it works functionally as a whole.

The result is a building that meets the high standards in acoustics, visual, thermal comfort, air quality and building integrity while saving energy.

Many building owners are hesitant to spend on improvements, especially when they do not see immediate results such as energy efficiency. They fail to realize that these are capital expenses and that they will definitely recoup their investments through energy savings and improved working conditions.

Involvement

The fifth success factor is probably the most overlooked and underrated strategy—the involvement of the staff and the building occupants. This is best done by forming a dedicated team that continually monitors the building's performance. The team can be made up of two people or more, depending on the complexity of the building systems.

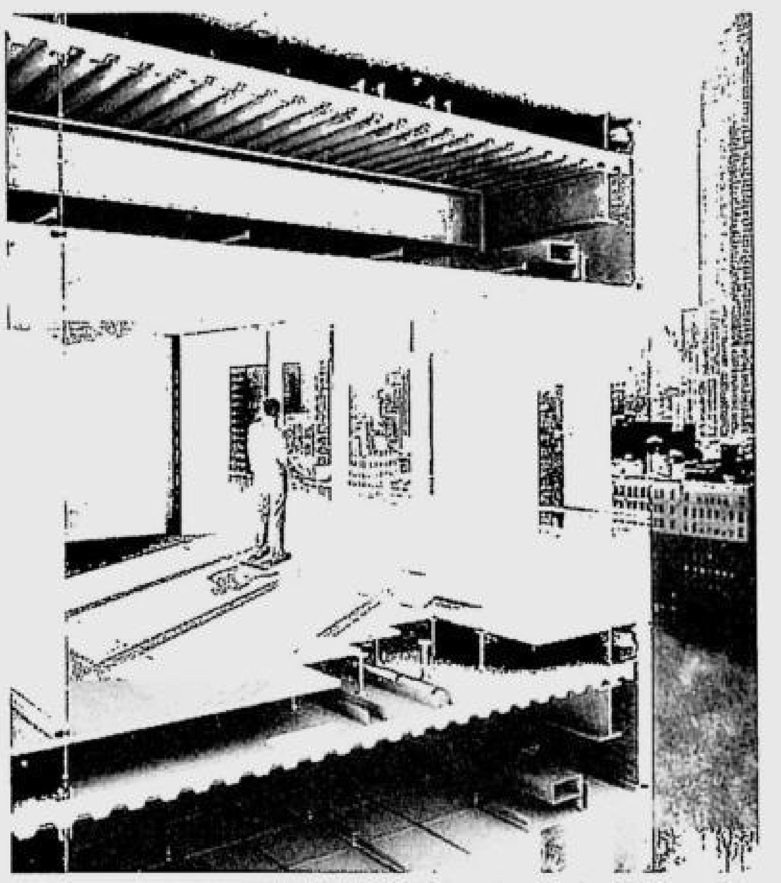
Many of the energy-efficient buildings in the Asean region today include this critical element. They form teams often referred to as the "Green Team." It is mainly responsible for informing all the building occupants about the company policy, how they can help and be a part of the "green culture" that is being established in the building or premises.

Their job consists in monitoring not merely the big energy guzzlers in the building like the air-conditioning and lighting systems but also simple maintenance jobs like window and door seals that need to be repaired or replaced to prevent air leakages, a common source of wasteful energy consumption.

Replacement of inefficient lamps, removal of dirty and outmoded plastic diffusers that reduce illumination, and cleaning of dirty air-conditioning filters, are some of the tasks that a green team performs.

The green team also trains the people involved in the operation of energy-consuming equipment. They are also responsible for obtaining measurements of the energy consumption by each area or department within the building. The results of the measurement are then shared with the building occupants so that they will know which group contributed most to the energy-conservation effort. The building owner may then give a prize to the winning group or some discount on the rent. Giving incentives to building occupants is a very effective way to encourage energy conservation. This is practiced by many buildings in Japan, considered by many as the most energy-efficient country in the world.

Most importantly, the green team teaches building occupants a way of thinking and analysis about energy conservation and energy efficiency. As mentioned earlier, energy conservation is making do with less, while energy efficiency is doing more with less. It is getting the same energy services while using less energy.



UNDERFLOOR air-conditioning system is an innovative feature of green buildings. The supply vents are at the floor and the return air at the ceiling. The conditioned air flows between the access floor and the concrete floor slab, creating a continuous plenum. As the air moves, it gathers heat from the work area until it is exhausted out of the room. This improvement is already in use in Malaysia. BANK OF AMERICA, COOK + FOX

* * *

To prequalify for the 2007 Asean Energy Awards, please call Marlon Domingo of the Department of Energy at 840-2243.

* * *

For comments or inquiries, e-mail amadodejesus@gmail.com.

Why retailers choose to launch fresh concepts at Bonifacio Global City

THE WELL-HEELED URBANITE willing to pay the price for premium retail items and one-of-a-kind shopping and dining experiences has found a new retail and dining hub at the city center of Bonifacio Global City. With over 100 outlets—many of which are already open—Bonifacio High Street is already a haven for shoppers who delight in good finds and foodies alike.

Bonifacio High Street's vibrance does not come merely from its mix of stores but also from a string of other experiences. To wit: a park that is almost a kilometer long and as wide as Ayala Avenue bordered by shops on either side; engaging art work amid the greenery; as well as the unique synergy offered by offices on top of the shops.

Particularly on Friday and Saturday nights, only those with reservations can get into many of the restaurants on Bonifacio High Street. The restaurants, which opened last year, are found at the ground floor of the Serendra multistory residential complex. The Serendra retail area adjoins the 40-meter-wide boulevard of brand-name anchor stores and corporate spaces amid the softscape of greens, sculpture and endless sky.

Long line of shoppers

But even if the boulevard of commercial and office spaces has yet to be formally launched, long lines of shoppers patiently waiting their turn to make their purchases in some of the outlets that had already opened were not unusual last Christmas season. Topnotcher was American retail sensation Krispy Kreme which has sold over 400,000 pieces of doughnuts since it opened in November.

The strong pedestrian traffic of Bonifacio High Street and its refreshing concept are now the main draws of this retail haunt. According to Abba Napa, marketing head of Italian steakhouse Balducci, diners at the restaurant, which is one the mainstays of Bonifacio High Street, shot up at the beginning of the year as upscale shoppers and foodies named it a new place to see and to be seen along with other luxurious restaurants in the area. "Before then, I could always find a seat here for dinner," she says.

ALMOST a kilometer long and 40 meters wide, Bonifacio High Street is a new retail, dining and office hub composed of a boulevard of lush greenery lined on either side by winner stores.

Doing good sales

Napa, who also owns, All Flip Flops, which sells the most complete line of Havaianas, is pleased at her decision to open her largest store in Bonifacio Global City. The 85-square-meter store dedicated to the premium rubber slippers line from Brazil has been doing good sales despite the fact that many of its neighboring outlets have not yet opened their doors. The store carries 100 styles of Havaianas with new models being introduced every quarter particularly for collectors who are willing to line up for the latest styles and variations. It is also incidentally the largest Havaianas outlet in the globe.

She recalls that the highway of greenery lined with winning retail and dining concepts was attractive to her from the very start. In fact, she convinced her father and other investors in Balducci to set up their Tuscan-inspired bistro within walking distance of All Flip Flops.

She observes that the accessibility of Bonifacio High Street to most of the major cities of Metro Manila also make it an ideal launch pad for new stores just establishing their presence in the Philippines such as Mizuno and Krispy Kreme. It is also an ideal site for the showcase outlets of brands such as Speedo and Hobbes and Landes which have located their biggest stores in the area. Nike will also soon be launching its largest outlet there.

Linked directly to the major thoroughfares of Edsa and the C5 highway, Bonifacio High Street can easily be reached by upscale residents from Quezon City, the Makati as well as the Ortigas business districts. Its proximity to the South Luzon Expressway makes it within reach of residents from Parañaque, Muntinlupa and other communities on the southern corridor.

Fresh retail setup

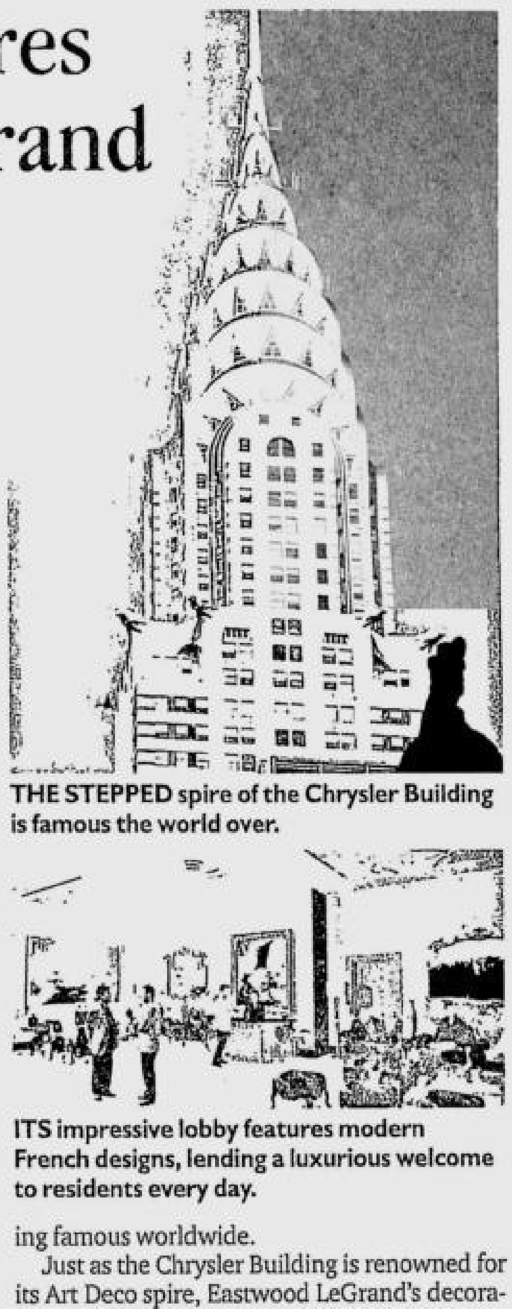
Unlike the typical commercial center that offers several levels of stores usually built around an activity center, Bonifacio Global City's centerpiece offers shoppers an unhampered view of the sky, art pieces and greenery all around as they stroll from shop to shop. According to Rowena Tomedlan, deputy group head of the Ayala Malls, which manages Bonifacio High Street, the fresh retail setup has been a big attraction for merchants.

Other retailers that are already enjoying Bonifacio High Street's superior location and amenities are Figaro, Lush, Timezone, Maxiworks, Speedo, Mini Shabu Shabu, Wristpod and The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf and Ecco.

Art Deco inspires Eastwood LeGrand

ART DECO, THE BASIS FOR ARCHITECTURE of New York City's iconic Chrysler Building and Empire State Building, may just make a comeback here in the country with the launch of Eastwood LeGrand.

"Eastwood City's architecture is inspired by the best the world has to offer. The launch of Eastwood City's new Palm District will boost the international appeal that Eastwood has come to be known for," noted Eastwood Property Holdings Inc. VP for Marketing John Natividad.



THE STEPPED spire of the Chrysler Building is famous the world over.

The beginnings of Art Deco

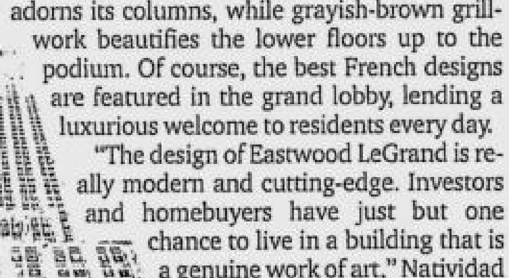
Art Deco's initial movement stems from the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts in Paris. French architects like Hector Guimard sought to demonstrate the French artists' leading position and evolution internationally. As an art form, Art Deco is an amalgamation of many different styles and movements in the early 20th century, including Constructionism, Cubinism and Modernism. It frequently used materials such as aluminum and stainless steel. Sweeping curves and stepped forms (more commonly called ziggurats) characterized skyscrapers.

When the movement crossed over to the other side of the Atlantic, American architects embraced it lovingly. Its popularity reached its peak during the Great Depression, since its opulent, functional and ultra modern style maintained a certain sense of practicality and simplicity, which still reflected the "American Dream." One such structure is the Chrysler Building, which was built from 1928 to 1930.

The Philippines' status as an American colony meant that Art Deco eventually found its way here. Many of Manila's buildings followed the American Art Deco theme. However, all of these buildings were leveled down during World War II.

A grand comeback

Art Deco makes the grandest comeback here in Manila with the launch of the 38-story Eastwood LeGrand. Its grills feature stainless steel prominently. Cheerful yellow hues give it a vibrant façade. All windows are tinted to give the entire building a modern edge. The windows are bounded by plain white trims reminiscent of the signature architecture that makes the Empire State Building famous worldwide.

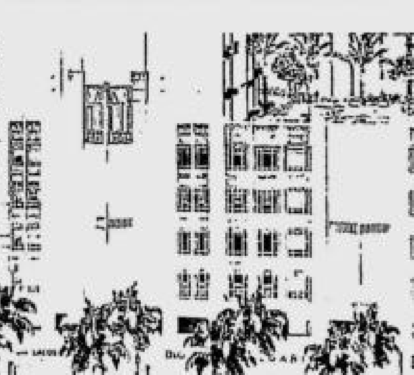


ITS impressive lobby features modern French designs, lending a luxurious welcome to residents every day.

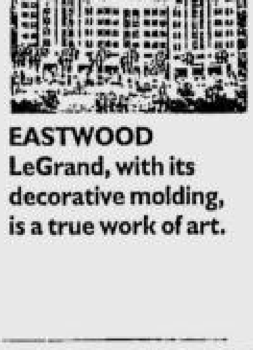
Just as the Chrysler Building is renowned for its Art Deco spire, Eastwood LeGrand's decorative molding on its very top is an elegant art form in itself. Large, geometric stonework adorns its columns, while grayish-brown grillwork beautifies the lower floors up to the podium. Of course, the best French designs are featured in the grand lobby, lending a luxurious welcome to residents every day.

"The design of Eastwood LeGrand is really modern and cutting-edge. Investors and homebuyers have just but one chance to live in a building that is a genuine work of art," Natividad declared.

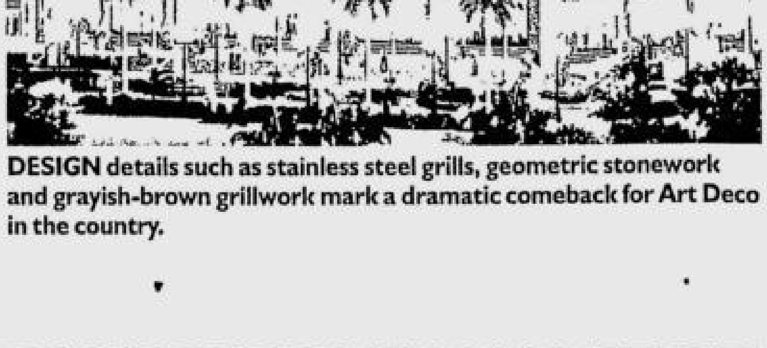
To inspect Eastwood LeGrand in greater detail, call 421-4243 or 421-4247 today for a viewing appointment. Or visit the Eastwood City Information Center on Eastwood City's hip Orchard Road to check out its new model units.



THE EMPIRE State Building is a towering icon of the Art Deco movement.



EASTWOOD LeGrand, with its decorative molding, is a true work of art.



DESIGN details such as stainless steel grills, geometric stonework and grayish-brown grillwork mark a dramatic comeback for Art Deco in the country.

Celebrity Club: where passion and pastimes meet

"CELEBRITY CLUB IS ONE OF the more vibrant exclusive membership clubs in this eastern part of Quezon City," says Celebrity Club general manager, Antonio B. Reyes. A casual tour of the premises is all it takes for one to be convinced that this is not an empty boast. Located within the Celebrity Sports Plaza Complex on Capital Hills Drive in the old Balara area in Diliman, Quezon City, the Celebrity Club is a recreational, leisure and health club—all conveniently housed under one roof.

In mid-afternoon on an ordinary week day, you find a couple of young girls from a nearby exclusive private school, still in their school uniforms, loitering at the lobby. Perhaps they are taking advantage of the short break before proceeding home to labor over their homework. Or they might be there for their aerobics or ballet class, which is offered year round, while their moms might be relaxing at the spa which offers massages, aromatherapy, jacuzzi and sauna. "The spa is a favorite among our women members," Reyes notes. Right next to the spa is a salon which caters to both male and female members.

Gym

The club's gym boasts of state-of-the-art fitness equipment. "We have acquired two new treadmill and cross trainer machines as part of our ongoing rehabilitation," Reyes says. "Our professional-level gym is the most frequented among the club facilities. The swimmers as well as the badminton and tennis players have their physical conditioning at the gym. We have our own gym instructor and his assistants who are available anytime to guide our members."

"We have just rehabilitated our badminton courts," Reyes says. "We added wood on top of the concrete floor and underneath the rubberized surface, to provide bounce and prevent injuries." From the original three badminton courts, there are now four. There are also four indoor tennis courts. "We have upgraded the lighting so we can meet the high standard for lighting in the tennis courts," Reyes says.

REYES

The Celebrity team members also join tournaments where they have shown their strong potential. There is also a 16-lane bowling center and a good-sized basketball covered court for league tournaments. "We even have a gallery for spectators," Reyes points out. "We are also working to revive the wall climbing facility." There is an archery and a fencing hall as well as space for karate and kickboxing. "The latest addition to the gym is the new boxing ring where we also have a trainer," Reyes says.

Grand ballroom

One more new addition to the club's facilities is the grand ballroom which can accommodate as many as 1,000 guests. It is an ideal venue for weddings and debuts. There are three club-produced shows within the year—the Halloween party in October for the younger members of the family; the Christmas party in December, which features a raffle for the whole family; and the Valentine's show in February for the "not-so-young couples," Reyes says.

This year, the Feb. 16 show featured Nonoy Zuñiga with Arnee Hidalgo as front act. There is also a karaoke bar with its own sing-along master. There are two restaurants—the Sitio Victoria for fine dining, and the Cafea coffee shop, which extends to the lanai area overlooking the swimming pool. There is also a fresh fruit juice stand at the lobby for healthy, ice cold fresh fruit juices.

The original Olympic-sized swimming pool continues to be the centerpiece of the Celebrity Club. And next to it are the kiddies' pool and the splash pool with its giant water slides. You do not have to wait for summer to enjoy these amenities. A proprietary membership entitles you to all these facilities. "And if you are a unit owner at The Manors, you automatically get playing rights at the Celebrity Club," Reyes says.

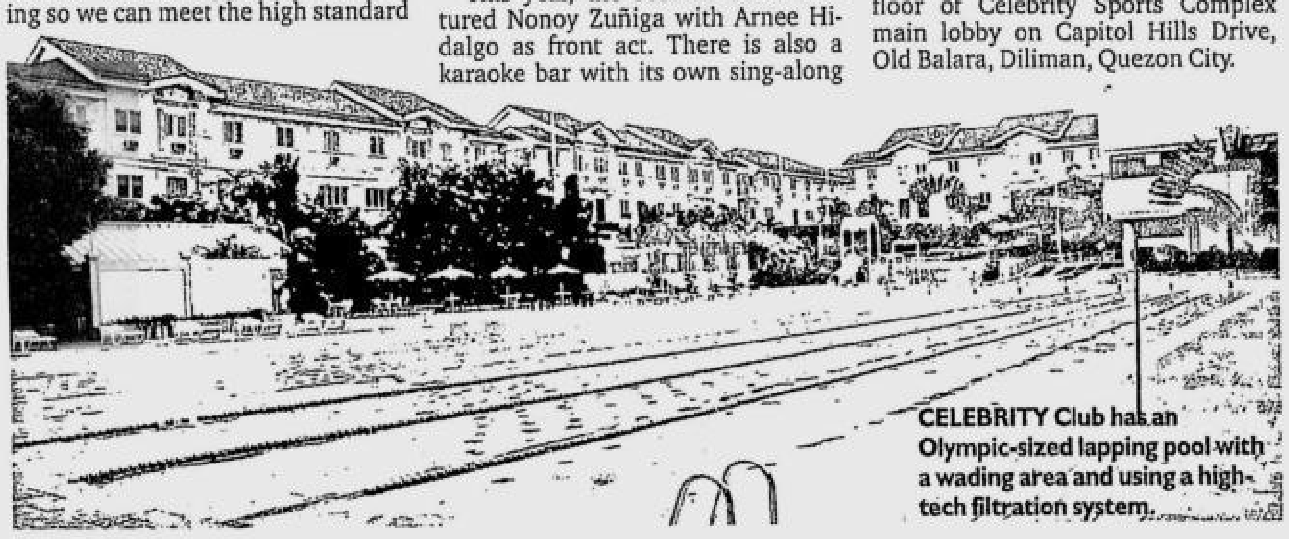
Another prime community

The Manors Celebrity Place is another prime community of DMCI Homes. As Reyes mentioned, owning a home in The Manors would automatically give you the rights to use The Celebrity Club. For a very reasonable monthly membership fee of just P1,500 per member, you get to use all of the amenities of the club including the basketball and tennis courts, the spa and the restaurant.

The Manors at Celebrity Place provides the ideal residential environment for the young urban professionals seeking solace in his home, away from the stresses of work. Located right next door to the Celebrity Club, residents of The Manors can enjoy the world-class amenities of The Celebrity Club just outside their door. The promise of a good life awaits you, right here at The Manors in Celebrity Place.

And because it is a community developed by DMCI Homes, you can be sure that The Manors Celebrity Place is all that you are looking for in a home and more.

If you want to find out how you can have it all with a residence at The Manors Celebrity Place which is your key to a membership to The Celebrity Club, you may call DMCI Homes at 888-3333 or you may also visit the model units located at the ground floor of Celebrity Sports Complex main lobby on Capitol Hills Drive, Old Balara, Diliman, Quezon City.


CELEBRITY Club has an Olympic-sized lapping pool with a wading area and using a high-tech filtration system.

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In Cavite, its residential properties are ideal for those working or doing business in Metro Manila while those in Pampanga are for people who love nature and idyllic setting.

Masaito Development Corp., following the considerable success it has attained in terms of real estate sales performance in 2006, is aiming high in 2007.

Last year was a trailblazer for MDC as it marked its 20th year of invaluable contributions to the bullish real estate industry. It also exceeded building master-planned and developed communities, coupled by an energized sales and marketing events, perk and privileges, amenities and facilities and its sales target last year. As a fitting celebration of such feat, the company vowed to pursue a vigorous sales pitch and offer incentives and promo to its growing clientele and patrons this year.

For 2007, MDC is continuing its avowed vision of enticing more buyers to invest in real estate which, MDC notes, is enjoying a renewed vigor and enthusiasm from its various stakeholders.

Latest projects

As a starter, marketing service head Ryan Jay de Guzman said MDC is set to unveil its latest project in Calabarzon area, the Covina Villas, scheduled for groundbreaking this month and launching in March. A commercial center will complete the amenities offered to buyers, De Guzman added.

After Covina Villas, another project, Bellazona, will be introduced to the public in March and launched in mid-year.

De Guzman said investors to both Covina and Bellazona are assured of safety and access as MDC is staring this year the construction of the Masaito Drive, a 20-meter wide and 2-km long road that will service the travel needs of locators to the sites. It is envisioned to link two Cavite roads—Buhay na Tubig and New Molino.

Classy Brentwood in Pampanga will afford future residents a chance to commune with nature, with completion of the Gardens of Brentwood this year.

Retirement haven

De Guzman said developing masterplanned communities that meet human needs and concerns is driving MDC to greater heights. Relatedly, its sister company, Richfield Properties Inc. is embarking on high-end residential and leisure project, the Lotus Village, situated in Barangay Molino 2, Bacoor, Cavite, envisioned as an exclusive retirement haven and a home away from home for Japanese and other nations' retirees.

Worth mentioning as MDC finished endeavors were last year's unveiling of Cassandra and Casa Amore, showcased under the Bellazona concept, and the groundbreaking of Isabella house model, being offered under the Mediterranean-styled Vallejo Place in Cavite.

Meanwhile, marketing manager Erwin de Guzman said as incentives to brokers and agents, MDC gave away two Toyota Innovas during the recent sales Rally 2007, and promised to regularly gift brokers with cars, and trips to China and Macau. For inquiries and details on MDC projects, call 887-7763 or fax 844-4722.

Reinventing the condo developer mold

IN A ROBUST AND DYNAMIC real estate industry such as that seen in the Philippines, innovation, creativity and experience are the attributes that separate the regular development firm from the recognized leaders. In a market that has steadily grown more knowledgeable throughout the years, the ability to provide cutting-edge products that deliver exactly what the next generation of homeowners want is the mark of a truly savvy and fast-rising development company.

Antel Land Holdings Inc., which had made its mark not only as a stalwart development firm but also as one of the leaders in providing themed lifestyle communities, attests to this fact. As a true veteran in the field, Antel earlier began a paradigm shift in perfecting the art of building high-rise towers and communities, with the end goal of providing state-of-the-art approaches in each of its products.

Development milestone

Among its development milestones are Platinum 1000 and 2000 on Annapolis Street in Greenhills, San Juan; the Antel Seaview Tower on Roxas Boulevard; the Antel Platinum Tower in Salcedo Village, Makati; the Antel 1000 and 2000 Corporate Centers; the Antel Global Corporate Center; and its landmark contribution to the Edsa Metro Rail Transit 3 project.

Now a new player has emerged from the veteran visionaries of Antel, one that is set to institute another paradigm shift that seeks to reinvent the concept of condo living.

The new company TKRL Realty & Development Corp. is a young and dynamic firm whose direct affiliation with Antel allows it to tap on its sister company's vast experience, while raising the bar of innovation and creativity another notch.

Headed by chief operations officer Philip Lim, the new company has taken on the monumental task of introducing a new way for the market to enjoy condo living.

"People nowadays always associate condos with towering high-rise structures and cramped spaces, while others view residential communities as quaint suburban structures that are mostly located outside the metropolis," stated Lim. "At TKRL, we found a way to merge both to provide a new product and new lifestyle for our market," he added.

"Defeating the cramped spaces associated with condos was our main goal. And we conquered it by incorporating a split-level design to our structures," Lim explained.

CENTROPOLIS Communities in Sucat, Muntinlupa City

TRESORA Residences in Las Piñas

The innovative split-level approach incorporated in the Tresora Residences in Las Piñas City, a 1.7-hectare community, helped provide exclusivity and convenience to new homeowners since only two units occupy each level. The design also ensured that one need only to climb a half flight of stairs to reach the level they want. The living spaces in Tresora Residences also embraced the design characteristics of a large townhouse, thereby adding to the appeal while staying true to its contemporary Asian-Tropical architecture.

TKRL is also hard at work to complete the Centropolis Communities, a one-hectare fusion of residential suites and commercial complex situated in Sucat, Muntinlupa City. The 4 low-rise cluster buildings incorporates a central park and pool area nestled in the heart of the development, with commercial and activity areas at the ground level. The design provides Centropolis with a distinctively cosmopolitan experience, highlighted by captivating European-inspired architecture that owners and buyers alike will get to enjoy on the scheduled turnover of the 1st building of Centropolis Communities in March 2007.

New features

Lim also noted that TKRL remains true to the Antel experience by injecting new features in their projects. Beamless, column-free designs, fireproofed and earthquake-resistant structures, Japanese construction technologies, are only some of the many features that TKRL included in their mixed-use community developments.

"At TKRL, we always keep in mind the ultimate inspiration of why we build—and that is to enhance the quality of life of the people who will soon live in our developments," Lim said.

All in all, TKRL represents an exciting and dynamic next-generation company that is fully geared to deliver visionary products that answers the needs of the country's next generation home-seekers.

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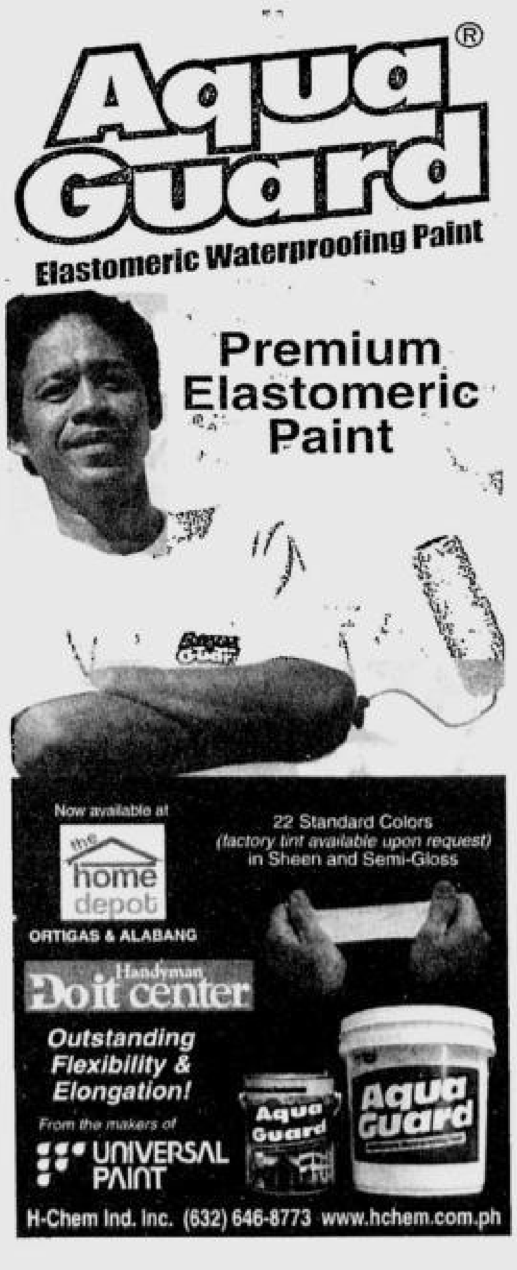
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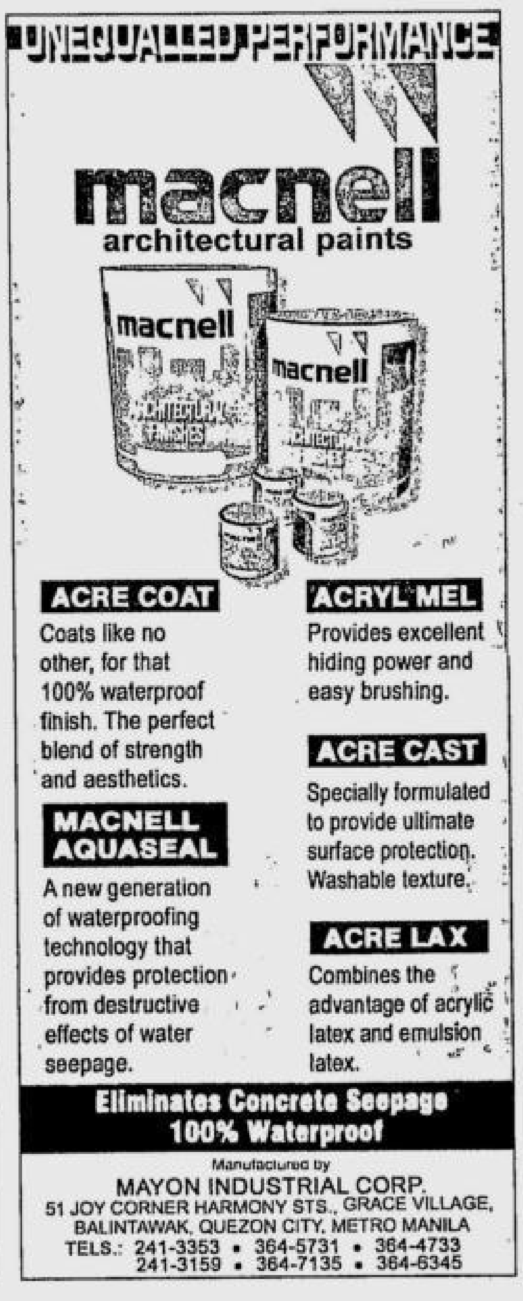
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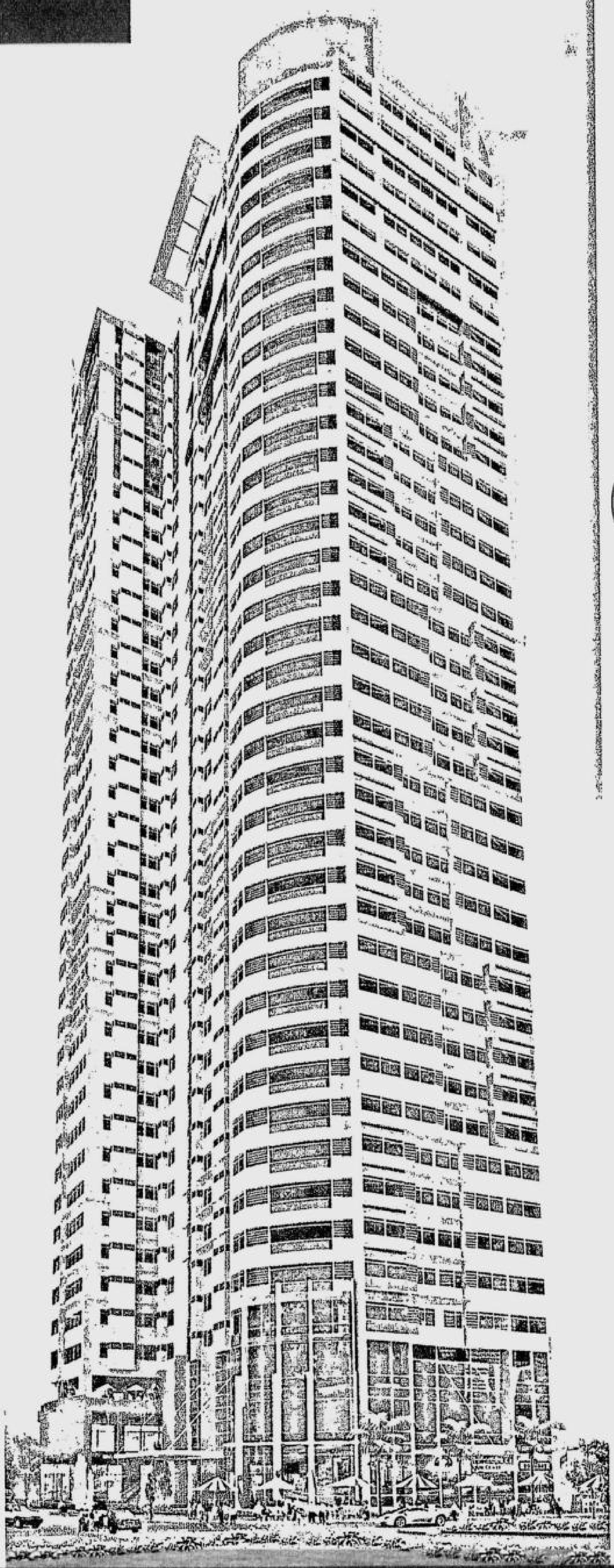

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Review social studies with Tals Diaz page C2

Tim Yap welcomes the Chinese New Year page D1

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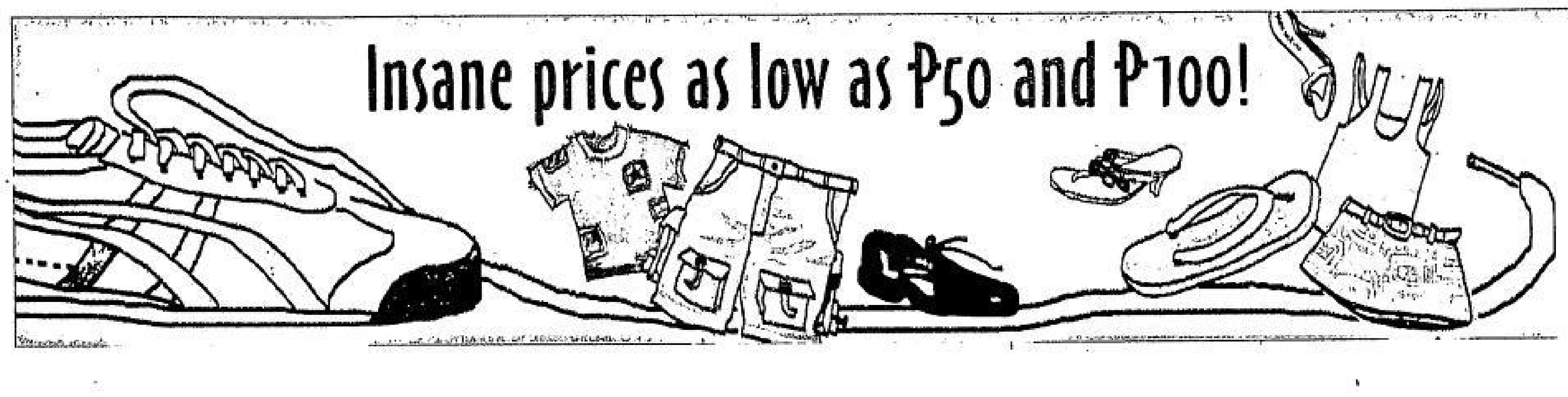

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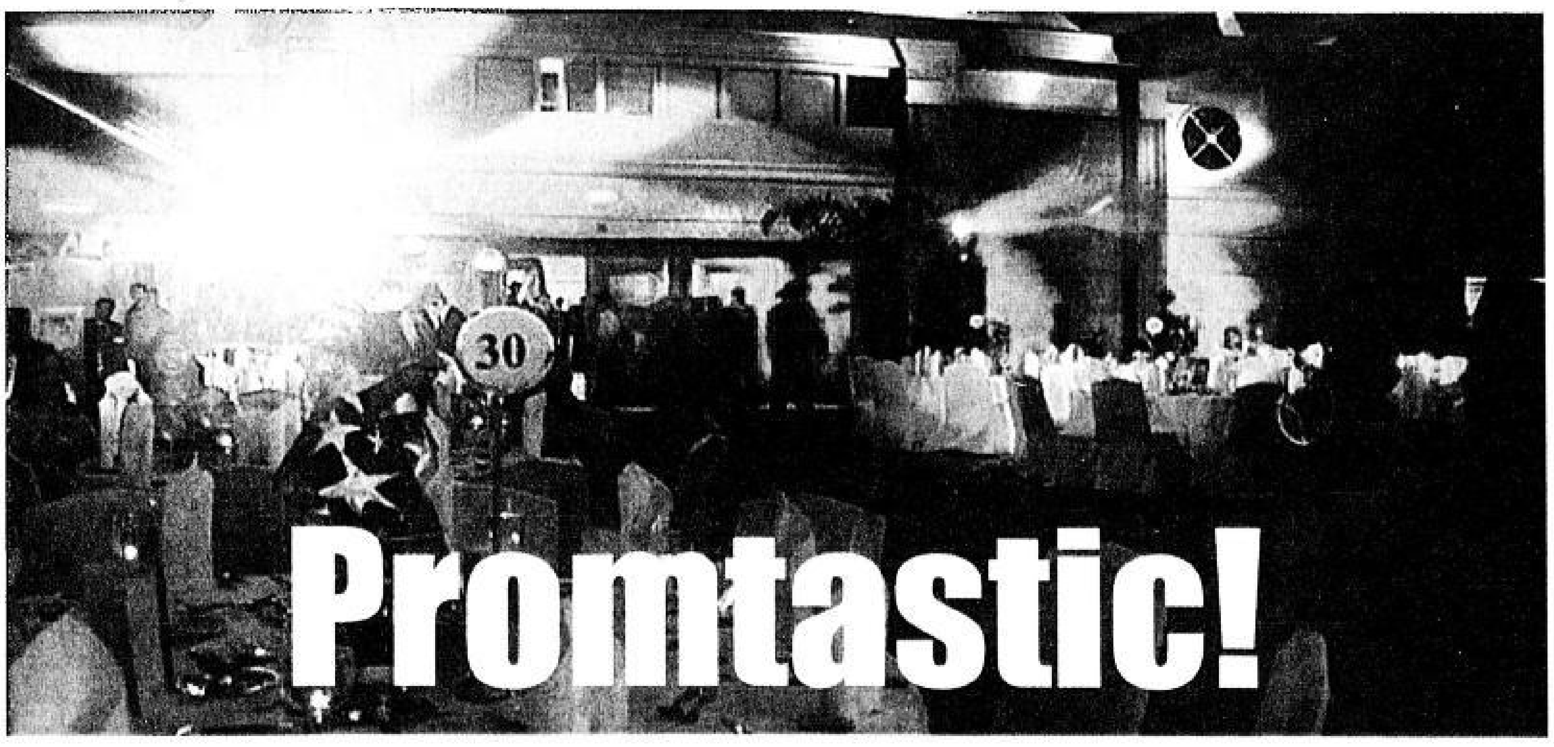
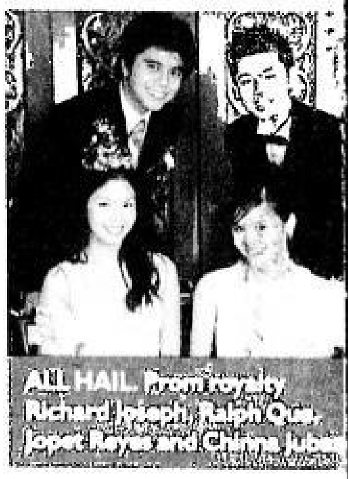
Masquerade, De La Salle Zobel's recent junior-senior prom, turned a high school tradition into a high-concept event



Promtastic!

OO O INDIE? It's Pedicab!



ALL HAIL. Prom royalty Richard Joseph, Ralph Que, Jopet Reyes and Chinna Jube

THE MASK of... Monte Cristo

HIGH no high school musical

RED carpet ready

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

THIS IS MY FIRST PROM ever!" goes Wawi Navarroza. It's hard to believe that the pixie-ish photographer and razor-cheekboned vocalist of The Late Isabel had never been socially immersed in this, the iconic event every teen movie crumps around. She had, in a manner of speaking, just popped her prom cherry. As Borat would say, "Very nice!"

While I helped myself to some chunks of carbs in a basket—called bread years ago—Wawi then shared that she had attended an all-girls school, where proms—like boys—remained fictional and taboo. Meanwhile, I had been working tuxes, hitting dances, and going nuts at proms since I was 13 pretending to be 16. (The last time I was invited to prom was in 2002, when my buds and I ended up somewhere in the heart of Vancouver, stuffing a hotel elevator with traveler palms, beer bottles, and chewed-up croissants. Don't ask.)

Off-the-wall flashbacks aside, the question stands. What was Wawi Navarroza doing in a high school dance? Same goes for design darling Kate Torralba. And evil genius filmmaker Quark Henares. And Super! illuminati Tals Diaz. And style supremo Rajo Laurel. And, well, me?

Post-punk picnic

Rather than feeling like bystanders at a post-punk picnic, the five of us had legit business at Masquerade, De La Salle Zobel's dressy junior-senior rager for the year Double 0-7. We were all there to track down party peeps with that intangible variable: Style. Apparently, proms these days hire undercover fashion police as entertainment.

Armed with my trusty Canon camera and my awesome sophomore volunteer usher, Cha Francisco, I milled outside the Rizal Ballroom of the Shangri-La Makati, tugging at anyone who looked cool or at least had a strong urge not to look predictable that night. Or ever.

Having been voted Best Dressed by my high school freshman class—*cough, Comme des Garçons*—I thought the whole thing would've been cake. However, everyone was edited to look like movie stars so it was a bit challenging. (About 500 out of 530 students turned up, according to DLSZ junior Bianca Francisco.)

The girls slinked around and posed for pics in a sly-vixen way. (You know, the hand-on-hip, face-tilted-to-the-side stance that would make Nicole Richie proud.) The dudes, most of whom looked sharp in slim, black suits, were also money. (Guys, it's really all in the fit.) It was like looking for a needle in a stack of needles, 16-year-old needles. Hmmm.

The panel's proclivities

Trailing the teen bottleneck to the ballroom, I was stopped briefly by a bouncer/parent who told me to get myself stamped at the registration table before entering. Epic pause. Being carded like that at least three times really made my night. And I just digressed. But you get me anyway.

With my effervescence on repeat, I powwowed with the other judges to find out how they were doing. I mean, time was ticking and we had to pick the finalists before indie upstarts Pedicab took the stage and/or the production staff had a surprise aneurysm. So huddled around a computer, we scanned the paparazzi-esque photos we took, chose the real-deal stylish ones from the resounding probablies, and boiled it all down to a dozen standouts.

"I have a soft spot for the Odd One Out. Rocks my world," said Wawi, who seemed to have summed up the panel's proclivities. (I also had a soft spot, but it was for the food they served. Yum.)

Quark, meanwhile, was dismayed that there weren't enough emo kids in attendance. "There was one guy I thought was emo, but he looked more like a waiter." Yes, he had his eye (liner) on those emo kids, especially this husky, My Chemical Romance-type dude he dubbed "MCR Boy." The group promptly acknowledged MCR Boy's age-appropriate internal pain and listlessness with a nomination.

Zippity doo-dah

Finally chowing down, we watched the 12 finalists do their "Zoolander"-inspired walk-off in the middle of the Saturday night dance floor. We had to put our forks down soon after, however, to rush onstage and give extra special props to a couple more prom-going tots.

A defining feature of genuine style is the ability to take a different tack, defy the status quo, and stand up to the Regina Georges of the world. One such individual was Philip Ty, who came to "Masquerade" in full-on "Count of Monte Cristo" threads. (And we all thought he was, like, Zorro. Our bad.) As if it were life imitating art imitating life, Quark concluded that nothing compared to our Count's "standing-ovation-'Napoleon Dynamite' moment."

We also wanted to salute those who brought handcrafted masks that evening, so we decided to give the Best Mask award thing to Paul Licarte. To the untrained eye, his crayon-scrawled Picachu mask could have been the result of a lack of planning, but to us, it showed a healthy dose of self-effacement. His unnamed sidekick had a cool

MIXED MASKS TO THE MAX (alliteration alert)

PROM PROM GIRLS

The best of times, the test of time

"We're in high school forever. It's just what we do with it." - Russell Lynes

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

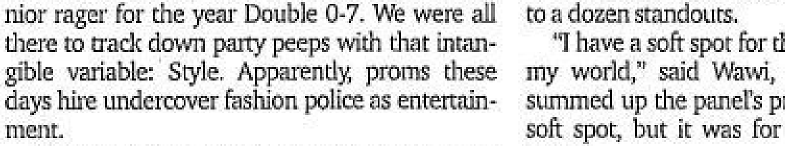
THERE WAS AN IMBALANCE in The Force, a rip in the time-space continuum, a glitch in the matrix. I blinked, and found myself back in high school. Stranger still, I was back in my high school prom.

It was the greatest irony since Bohemia became prime real estate. I was asked to be one of the style judges for my old high school's prom night, along with fellow peers and colleagues in the media, film, photography and fashion sphere. As the fashion Gestapo, we were tasked to single out the stylish and the outlandish for the night.

Social Studies

How this all hit me, well, it was like taking a refresher course in Social Studies. I was teleported back to those hyperreal years when you struggled to define yourself while co-habiting with all the creatures in the campus petri dish. See, way before there was "Lost" and "Survivor," there had already been this longstanding social experiment that put together such clashing personalities in one place for hundreds of days to see how they'd get along. There were the alpha populars, the class clowns, the rockers, the "*coño* kids," the nerds, the gay brigade, and the indefinable outsiders who were perpetually on standby from the mother ship. One need not think too hard how these different groups were classified in the teenage caste system. The beautiful ones and the athletes, of course, were the reigning class, while the geeky, fashion-challenged kids found each other at the subterranean levels.

Now, if you were one of the popular ones, high school was undoubtedly the best of times. There were some who were simply obsessed with popularity (which should've clued them early on about a bright future in Philippine politics). I admit that watching some of those stars from afar back then was painful, for there were a few standouts that were obsessed with their looks and brand name clothes—heck, even their stationery was scented and branded. And yes, those girls spared no one who was slightly off from their radar of conformity. It was hard not to feel a certain degree of loathing, especially towards this one "perfect" girl who would actually bring an extra big bag on Valentine's Day, because she just assumed that guys would shower her with dozens of roses.



CLASSIC school of rock

In the judicial system of the high school jungle, being different was a crime, and being uncool was the greatest sin of all

CARRIE

CARRIE'S prom was bloody memorable

Those from the other side of the spectrum were just as painful to watch. Only because my *mamon* heart would go out to them each time they'd pass by and sniggers and whispers behind their backs followed, only because they were overweight, or wore thick glasses or unpolished shoes and unbranded socks, or were simply different. Yes, in the judicial system of the high school jungle, being different was a crime, and being uncool was the greatest sin of all.

What party?

Of course, I wasn't spared from feelings of insecurity amid this daily dose of scrutiny. See, I was a scrawny, scrappy kid back then—I was already sporting anorexic chic way before it was banned in the catwalks of Madrid. Gym class was simply unbearable, for that meant having to dress up in the bathroom with all the other girls who just seemed more mature than I was (read: Had breasts), and already had boyfriends when I was still blushing with the mere mention of the word.

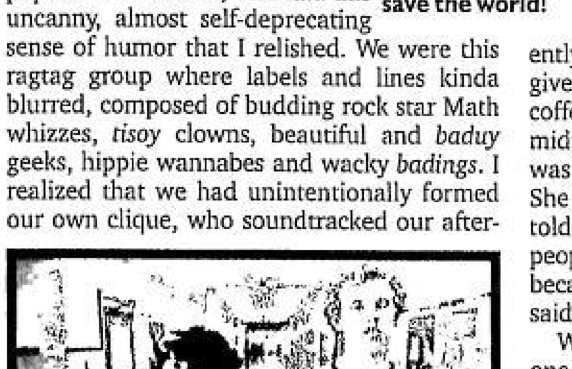
Though I wasn't a total pariah, I remember that there were a few big private house parties that I wasn't invited to, and I wondered constantly if, behind my backs, people snickered at me for being weird or having good grades (yes, I actually *liked* studying), and therefore didn't make the coolness prerequisite.

The Early Indies

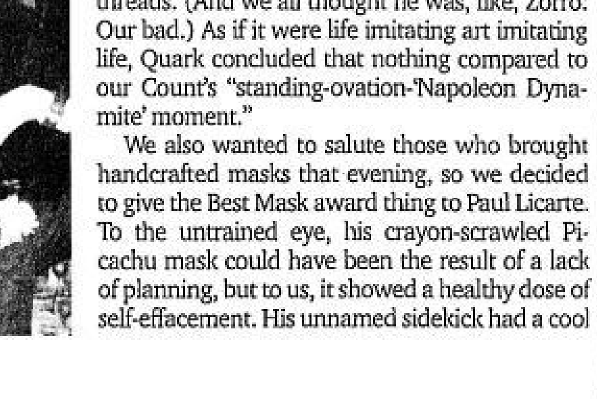
Eventually, I did find some sort of salvation in high school, thanks to my own R's—rock, reading and writing. Okay, add reggae into that mix too. At some point, I took solace among friends who shared the same love for the page and the rage. In my senior year, a few of the tribes merged (a la "Survivor," *o ha*!) and I found myself as part of this great group of free-spirited individuals who embraced their passions (even if they weren't the popular inclinations) and had this uncanny, almost self-deprecating sense of humor that I relished. We were this ragtag group where labels and lines kinda blurred, composed of budding rock star Math whizzes, *tisoy* clowns, beautiful and *baduy* geeks, hippie wannabes and wacky *badings*. I realized that we had unintentionally formed our own clique, who soundtracked our afternoons at the cafeteria or our after school gatherings with Bob Marley's anthems. At that time, it was the closest I could get to being part of an ideal world where everyone was respected and appreciated for their differences. More than being "in," we were individuals.

Perhaps I was just lucky.

SAVE the cheerleader, save the world!



IT'S ALL geek to me



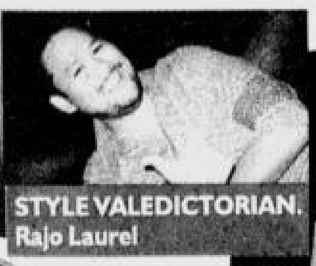
CRUEL to be cool

Survival of the unfittest

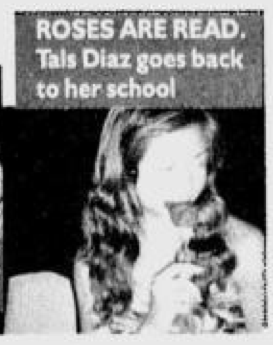
If I could end this with another anecdote related to high school, it was light years later, already in my twenties, during one of my spontaneous escapes to my favorite island, days before the New Year revelry. I was desperately looking for a place to stay because it was peak season and all the resorts were fully booked. Suddenly, an old high school classmate came up to me, but had to reintroduce herself because she looked so different—she had shed almost a hundred pounds, looked gorgeous and thereby gave justice to a string bikini. She apparently moved to that island, and thus offered to give me and a friend free boarding, food and coffee in the morning. In one of those tipsy midnights on a hammock outside her cottage, I was thanking her profusely for her generosity. She became pensive for a moment and finally told me, "you know, you were one of the few people in school who didn't make fun of me because I was fat." Another pause, and she said, "I can't believe I survived high school!"

We never really leave high school do we? At one point in our lives, we've been that shy/insecure/fat/scrappy/nerdy/freaky/snobby/anxious/angry kid with a survival tale of our own. The Dickensian twist to all this is that while being "uncool" in high school may have cost you a few party invites, someday it may just qualify you to be a good judge in the bigger classroom called life.

AND THE winner is …



STYLE VALEDICTORIAN. Rajo Laurel



ROSES ARE READ. Tais Diaz goes back to her school

goofy robot mask, too. In a sea of prim, quirks are totally refreshing.

The iPod vignette in my mind

As the program wound down, the lights dimmed and Embassy Super Club's resident beat juggler, Mars Miranda, hit the decks. I surveyed the pricey environs, which by then was overrun by kids camwhoring and poplocking to jams by Akon, Nelly Furtado, and Chris Brown. It was straight out of "My Super Sweet 16" but totally mini-diva-free. I think.

The iPod in my mind, though, was playing a classic called "17 Again" by the Eurythmics. "And it feels like I'm 17 again/Looking from the outside in/Some things never change …" I tried hard not to gag at the potential cheesiness of that vignette, but the memories really started rolling back. Among the less than ten proms I had shown up to in my lifetime, this one had the lock on the top spot, and it wasn't even officially mine. Duh.

UNDERAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE. Me in whatevz mode

SHE'S bringin' sexyback

Kate Torralba, somehow, felt the same way. "This year's Zobel prom was fantastic and pulled out all the stops! It took my breath away and I honestly felt sixteen again. It made up for my senior prom which I missed most of. I won Miss Tardy instead of Best Dressed 1996!"

High school avatar

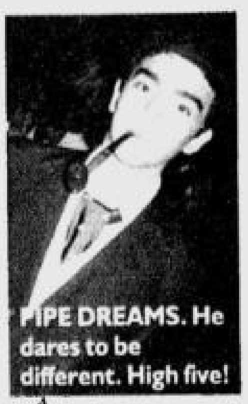
Comparing NC-17 me with today's version, I realized that there are some things that haven't changed. (Talking about style, I still fit into clothes I've had since 6th grade, like the Agnès B. vest I wore that night, which is kinda scary now that I think about it. But seriously.) High school, to paraphrase Cady Herron in "Mean Girls," is still like the African jungle—wild, competitive, and full of tribes. On the flipside, it's also a phase that pulses with jockish optimism about changing the world before last period, or zapping that zit overnight. Sigh.

KATE XPECTATIONS. Kate Torralba

TWO-TONED. Killer shoes, killer outfit

Its default avatar, the prom, hasn't changed either. It's still a rite of passage that just became more art-directed and media-savvy. See, when a high school tradition is multiplied by a little imagination, it can clearly turn into a superkickass, high-concept event.

Thanks to Bianca Francisco, Jam Muñasque, Len Francisco and everyone at Masquerade.



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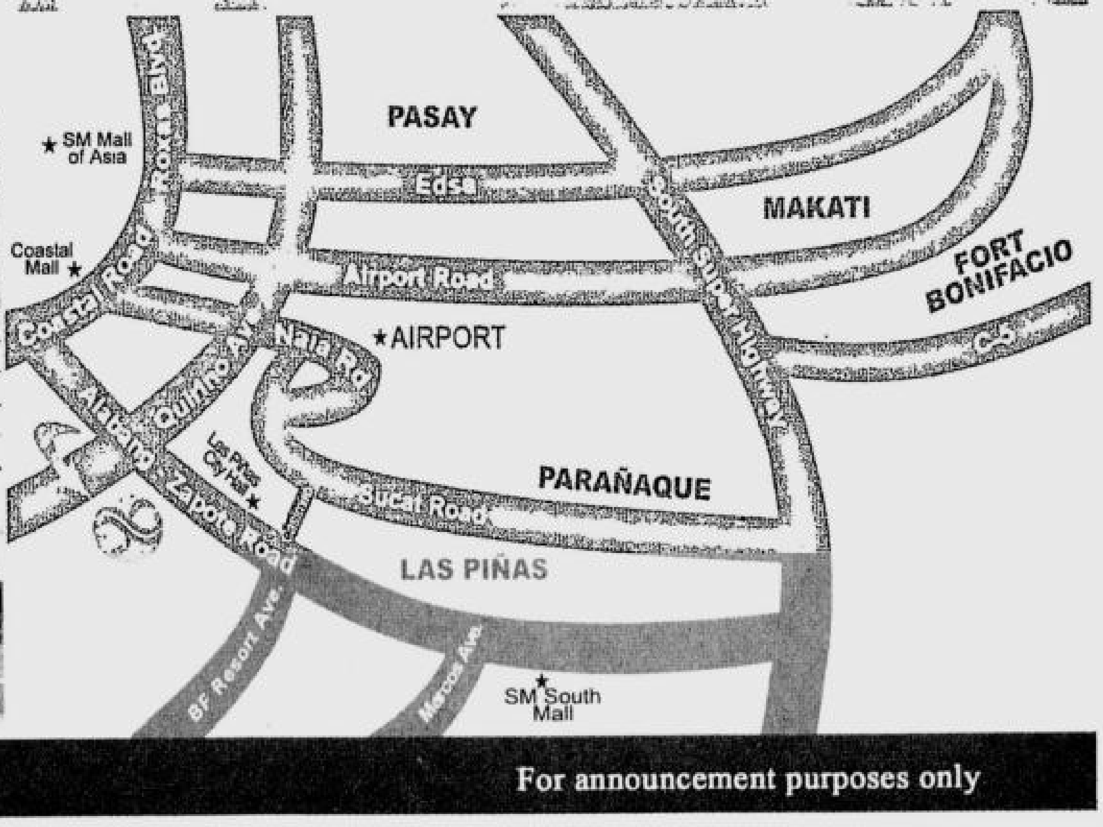

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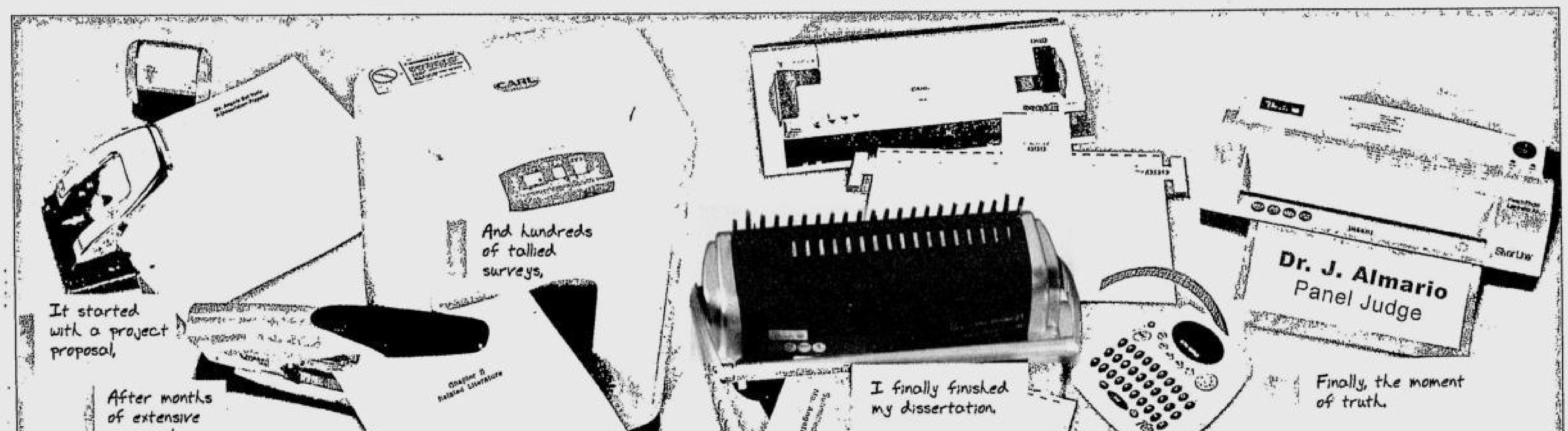


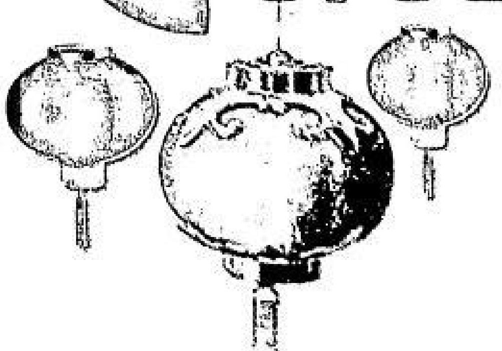
It started with a project proposal,
After months of extensive research,
And hundreds of tallied surveys,
I finally finished my dissertation.
Dr. J. Almario
Panel Judge
Finally, the moment of truth.

CARL COLOP DYMO Peach Maped

What's your story?

National Book Store

Celebrate Chinese New Year at SM SUPERMALLS



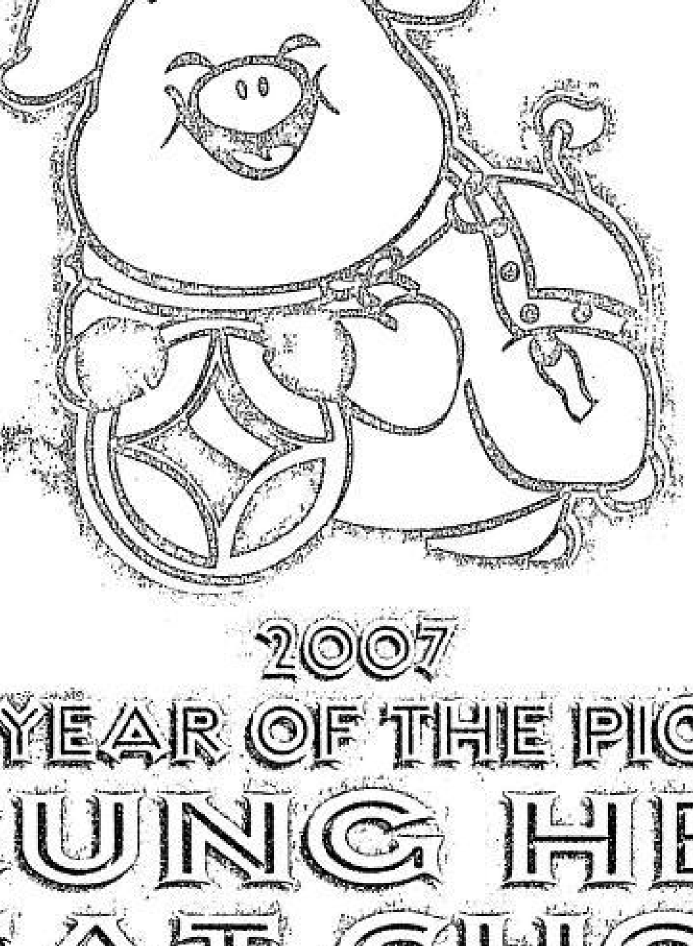
The Chinese lunar calendar sets February 18 as the start of the Lucky Year of the Fire Pig. Observed by over a sixth of the world's population, the Chinese New Year begins with the appearance of the new moon and ends about 15 days later with the full moon.

Welcome Chinese New Year with a joyful bang! Celebrate with the whole family at SM Supermalls.

A grand mix of shop 'n save opportunities, lots of eat-out choices and mall entertainment – with a festive backdrop of red and gold lanterns, and banners – are in store for you and your family.

CELEBRATE CHINESE NEW YEAR

AT SM SUPERMALLS



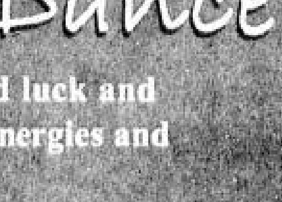
2007 YEAR OF THE PIG

KUNG HEI FAT CHOI

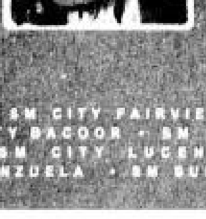
Wushu Exhibition

A dynamic demonstration of the art of self defense and its aesthetic applications on mental discipline and good health

Emperor's Court



An imperial chair set against an equally royal arch awaits shoppers who wish to pose for souvenir shots.



Lion and Dragon Dance

A spectacular performance that ushers in good luck and the best of fortunes by chasing away negative energies and scaring away evil spirits.

SM CITY NORTH EDSA • SM CITY FAIRVIEW • SM CITY MANILA • SM CITY SAN LAZARO • SM MEGAMALL • SM CITY STA. MESA • SM CITY BICUTAN
SM CITY SUCAT • SM CITY BACOOR • SM SOUTHMALL • SM CITY DASMARINAS • SM CITY BATANGAS • SM CITY MARILAO • SM CITY PAMPANGA
SM CITY BAGUIO • SM CITY LUCENA • SM CITY CEBU • SM CITY ILOILO • SM CITY DAVAO • SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA • SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO • SM CITY STA. ROSA • SM CITY CLARK • SM SUPERCENTER PASIG • SM CITY LIPA

Don't miss these New Year mall highlights!

Emperor's Court

Sit royally on the "imperial" chair specially provided for your souvenir shot.

Feb. 17-18	SM City North Edsa • SM City Fairview • SM Southmall • SM City Sta. Mesa • SM City Manila • SM City Bicutan • SM City Sucat • SM Supercenter Pasig • SM City San Lazaro • SM Megamall • SM City Bacoor

Wushu & Sanshou Exhibition

Experts in the sport demonstrate self-defense tactics and aesthetic methods of achieving mental discipline and general well-being.

Metro Manila Malls

Feb. 17	SM Southmall • SM City Manila
Feb. 18	SM City North Edsa • SM City Fairview

Provincial Malls

Feb. 18	SM City Iloilo
Feb. 19	SM City Baguio

Lion & Dragon Dance

Witness the colorful and stylized performance of the costumed dancers as they usher in a happy, lively and prosperous New Year.

Metro Manila Malls

Feb. 17	SM Supercenter Valenzuela
Feb. 18	SM City North Edsa • SM City Fairview • SM Southmall • SM City Manila • SM City Bicutan • SM City Sucat • SM Supercenter Pasig • SM Megamall • SM City San Lazaro • SM City Bacoor
Feb. 19	SM City Sta. Mesa

Provincial Malls

Feb. 17	SM City Lucena
Feb. 18	SM City Pampanga • SM City Cebu • SM City Dasmariñas • SM Supercenter Molino • SM City Lipa • SM City Marilao • SM City Baguio • SM City Clark • SM City Iloilo • SM City Batangas • SM City Sta. Rosa • SM City Davao • SM City Cagayan de Oro

Tea Leaf Reading

Get a glimpse of things to come as your tea leaf expert reads your future.

Feb. 17	SM Supercenter Pasig • SM City San Lazaro
Feb. 18	SM City Fairview

Stiltwalking

Share the excitement of feeling 10 feet tall as stuntmen wow shoppers with their skills.

Feb. 17	SM Supercenter Valenzuela • SM Southmall
Feb. 18	SM City Sta. Mesa • SM City Manila

Chinese Choir & Ensemble

Take a break from your shopping and listen to a little bit of Chinese music.

Feb. 17	SM City Manila

Chinese Calligraphy Demonstration

With brush and ink, master calligraphers elegantly demonstrate the ancient Chinese art.

Feb. 17	SM City San Lazaro • SM Southmall
Feb. 18	SM City North Edsa

Chinese Mime

Enjoy this no-speak, all-action performance at selected SM Malls.

Feb. 17	SM Supercenter Valenzuela
Feb. 18	SM City North Edsa • SM City Fairview • SM City Sta. Mesa • SM City Manila

Free Feng Shui Reading

Get an insight into the science of positioning the right things at the right places.

Metro Manila Malls

Feb. 17	SM Southmall • SM City San Lazaro
Feb. 18	SM Supercenter Pasig

Provincial Malls

Feb. 17	SM City Lucena

My Little China Parade

Everybody loves a parade! You will, too, when you join us on these dates:

Feb. 17	SM City Batangas
Feb. 18	SM City Pampanga • SM City Dasmariñas
Feb. 19	SM Supercenter Molino

Cheong Sam Fashion Show

East meets West in this disctinctive fashion collection inspired by Oriental motifs.

Feb. 18	SM City Lucena

Chinese Dance Presentation

Traditional Chinese dances performed by the Oro Christian Grace School.

Feb. 18	SM City Cagayan de Oro

Ang Pao for Luck

Shop around and get red envelopes with chocolate gold coins for great luck (at selected tenants).

Feb. 18-28	SM City Clark • SM City Pampanga • SM City Baguio • SM City Marilao • SM City Batangas • SM Supercenter Molino • SM City Lucena • SM City Dasmariñas • SM City Sta. Rosa

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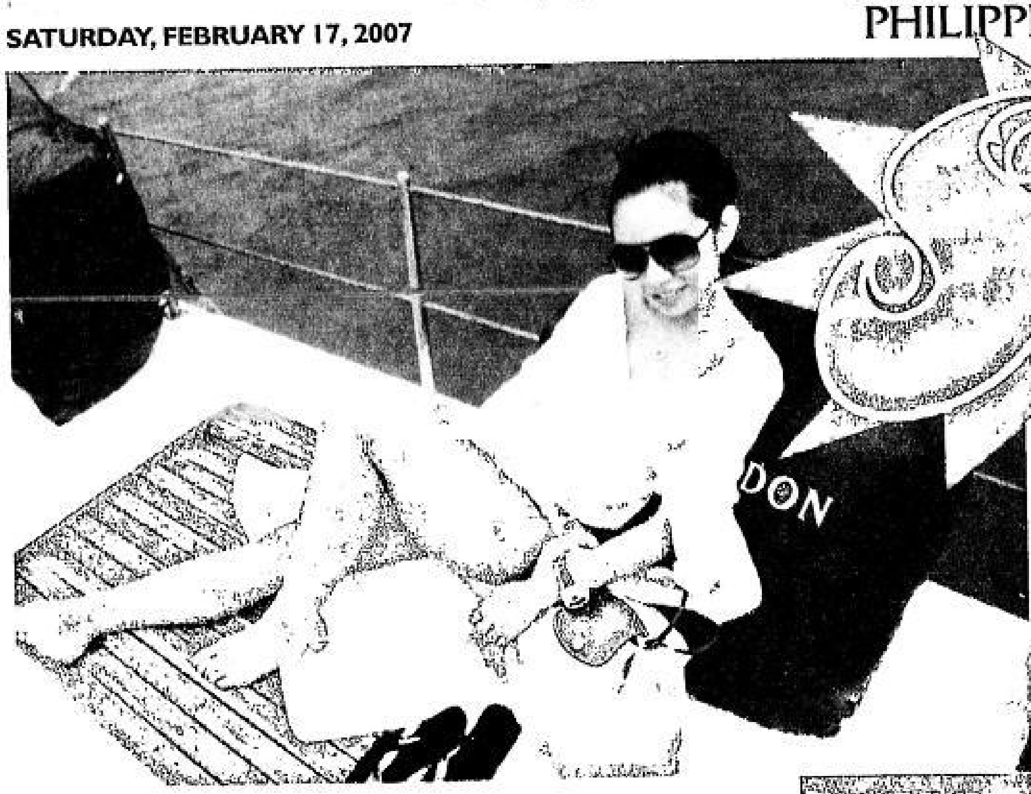

YACHT CLUB [illegible]

'My brother is not a Pig!'

Tim Yap

BUT SOMEHOW THIS YEAR is. Pardon the use of Mimilanie Marquez's famous phrase as this article's title but I just had to pork it out to welcome the Chinese New Year.

Yes, it's another year—so bring out your wild side, you boar! There's so much to feast and celebrate about—like, the beach!

There's nothing like looking forward to another great year with heightened optimism (if you had a bad year, fret not—this year I guarantee it'll get B-E-T-T-E-R!).

And why not? It's a double whammy celebration this week, what with Valentine's just over (I just had a nice, simple meal of pesto pasta from Embassy door bitch **Aslie Aslanian**—alone! And I loved it!) and Miss Piggy coming to eat us alive. Being barbequed never felt this good.

Feeling good should always be our priority. That's why I always make sure New Year's (no matter what race) must be spent in the most festive way.

Microtel mania

I spent mine at Microtel in Boracay where a lot of my friends booked their vacation over the past ho-ho-holiday season. **KC Concepcion** stayed here and so did rock royal **Atom Henares, Ipe Cruz** and **David Nugent** (It's a new year, so new everything, folks) and **Victor Basa**, ABS-CBN's new gun and MTV's latest VJ—so watch out for him.

MY BROTHER/ D2

SHAKE IT [illegible]

PHOTOS BY TIM YAP

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Age of Heroes
RENEGADES
BRUCE LEE
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* The 50% discounted rate applies only to the **game of the day.**
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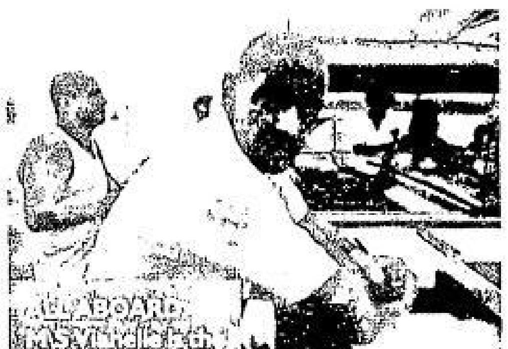
HOME AT LAST.

SAIL SEASON.

‘My brother is not a Pig!’

WATERSPORTS.



ALL ABOARD.

HE’S THE ONE. Tim Yap points

From page D1

Nothing gives me more excitement than seeing the Diniwid side of Bora blossom into the “great escape” from the par-tay side of the island. Diniwid has become the new Station 1, Station 1 is the new Greenbelt, Station 2 is the new Fort. And Station 3 has become…fluxxe—Euro fluxxe, that is.

Even when I come home at ten in the morning on most days, Microtel GM Dean Cid greets me with the warmest smile that makes me head straight to the breakfast table spread prepared by **Ian** and **Leah Bautista**—of Palomaria fame. “It’s really nice to come home here,” I whisper to myself every time I walk into Microtel’s halls.

At that time of the day I would see party shy supermodels sun bathing by the hotel’s beachfront. **Teresa Herrera** and her other bevy of Asian supermodels would get their dose of sun from Microtel’s shores.

Nami high

In between all that, I would grab grilled prawns, tom yum and salpicao from Nami, another prime prime Diniwid resort with the best butler service and view of the island—and my favorite lady of Bora leisure, tita **Candy Perez de Tagle**, who is at the utmost prime of her life, doing dragon boat races and hosting parties in the evening.

From Candy let’s hop to Cheese, as in **Cheese Ledesma**. She and her boyfriend **Joel Ong** invited me to once again hop onboard M\S Vianelle—the party yacht of all party yachts. We observed the breath taking sunset as we sailed towards the horizon, with bubbly overflowing like the ocean. This summer, I hear they’re almost fully booked.

I will not make a rundown of restaurants to check out—but I can’t help it. New spots like Chef **Carla Gabor**’s Traviessa, Chef **Binggoy Remedios**’ Dos Mestizos, my hands down favorite Island Chicken Inasal of **Nina Bustamante**, **Nino Zulueta** and **Sunshine De Leon’s Cyma** and my super favorite, Geni Psinakis and **Nikos Gitisis**’ Zuzuni. God knows how many times I’ve made it to my favorite island with the help of SeaAir—still the fastest way to fly to Boracay!

Somehow Bora can also be too action-packed that I sometimes forget to sleep. But this New Year, let us look forward, think ahead, get some rest—and then eat, drink and be merry.

Feeling good should always be our priority

BORA BATHING.

SUNNY CYMA.

MICROTEL’S DEAN

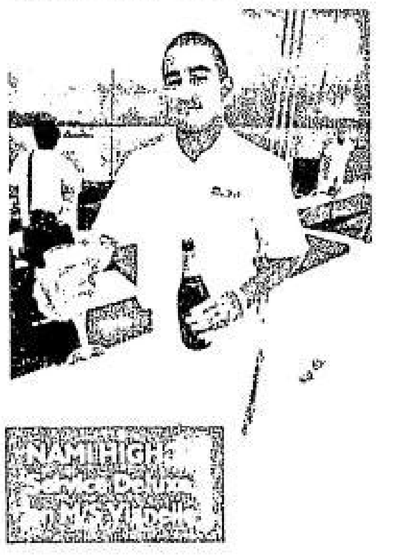
TAKE A SIP.

TRAVIESSA TIME.

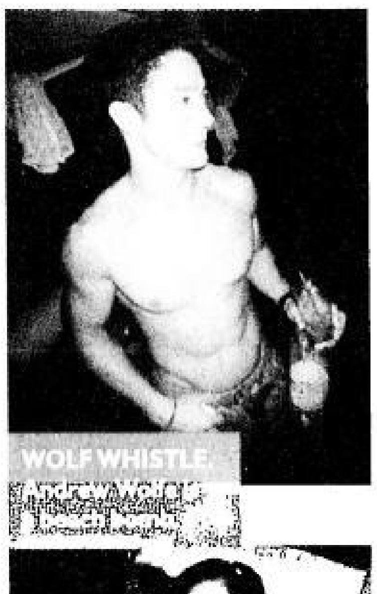
DATU REIGNS. Bora Royalty Datu

BRAND NEW.

ISLAND SPICE. Nina Bustamante



NAMI HIGH.



WOLF WHISTLE. Andrew Wolff

DIVE FAMILY. Djila Brenner and Chesca

ROCK PICK. Atom Henares and Karen Jones

FRESH NEW CHAPTER. Louise and Jude enjoy

FRENCH QUARTER.

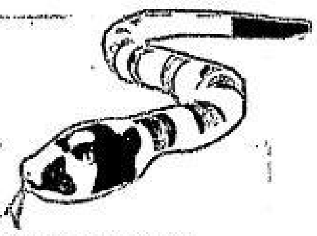
SHOWGIRL NOW.

HAPPY SPARTY. Mark Santiago and Freida Dario.

SUNNY SIDE.

Hayop! It's Super!'s guide to a wild 2007

Snake



(1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001)

Why did the boar cross the road? To get to the snake. The snake is in direct conflict with the animal sign of the year. Be extra-careful and avoid offending others—the backlash can be quite severe. Do not give in to impulsive decisions but let your natural instinct guide you to avoid getting cheated. Your wealth luck is better this year.

Bad Months: Feb & Nov for Career, April for Wealth, June for Money & January 2008 for Wealth

Good Months: May & July

Rat

(1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996)

Mickey Mouse wouldn't be happy. The coming year will not be an easy one for the Rat as there are indications of poor luck in love, problems with health and monetary loss through being cheated. However, there is also a good news in terms of money and success luck if you carry the necessary amulets for the year and take steps to control the conflicting stars in your chart.

Best Months: August for Money and October for Wealth

Bad Months: Feb, April, Nov & Jan 2008.

Rooster

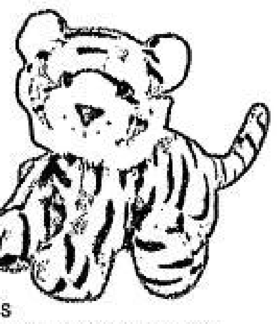
(1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005)

You'll be hearing a lot of crowing. The rooster will fare better this year with lucky stars flying into their chart and 2007 is a great year for the rooster to improve their skills by learning new things. There is wealth luck indicated, provided they carry the 2007 Ally Amulet or display a set of their Ally and Friend Figurines on their work desk to enhance networking. Cock-a-doodle-do!

Good Months: May for Career, July for Wealth, September for Windfall luck

Bad Months: August & October

Tiger



(1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998)

No roaring for the tiger in 2007. Things will not go smoothly for you this year as your chart is afflicted with unlucky stars. It is possible for you to overcome the bad luck so long as you remain confident and stay on your decided course of action.

Best Months: June for Money, August for Wealth, October is Good

Bad Months: Feb, May, July, Sept, Nov.

Rabbit

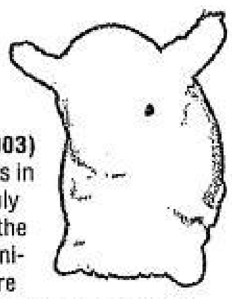
(1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999)

This will be a very energetic year for the Rabbit (for reference, see the Energizer Bunny commercial or Charlotte's toy in Sex and the City), and most of your thoughts will be focused on what you wish to do with your future. The energy around you is charged with fire so there is a risk of emotional or physical breakdown. The highlight of this year is friendship. An Ally Coin might help. That's all, folks.

Best Months: March for Wealth, May for Money, October for Career, December for Wealth

Bad Months: April, June, September & January 2008

Sheep



(1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003)

Skip the lamb chops in 2007. The sheep is truly blessed this year and the luckiest of all zodiac animals in 2007. There are signs of possible increases in income and wealth provided you contain the ill energies of the year. Your luck knows no bounds this year, so maximize it.

Good Months: February for Wealth, April for Windfall Luck, September & October for Career Luck and November for Wealth

Bad Months: March, May & December

From page D4

or sitting houses benefit from strong prosperity luck, of east facing houses from the luck of completion and future prosperity, and of south facing houses from unexpected windfall luck.

Be careful however, as the illness star 2 dominates the annual chart of the year, when the world's energy will be vulnerable to the spread of illness and new diseases, this is the most obvious warning coming from the feng shui chart of 2007. *(So, get your flu shots.)* In addition, be careful to mitigate the quarrelsome star 3 which is in the patriarchal northwest sector this year, and could impact the men of the house and those who are holding top management positions such as CEOs, presidents and even prime ministers if not dealt with.

Feng shui expert Marites Allen is the president & CEO of World of Feng Shui Philippines. She provides local and international feng shui consultation services (by appointment only). For feng shui inquiries visit WOFS boutiques at: WOFS Podium (9147888), WOFS Serendra (9097088), WOFS Mall of Asia (5560615), WOFS The Block SM North Edsa (4420113) and WOFS Cebu (2314088).

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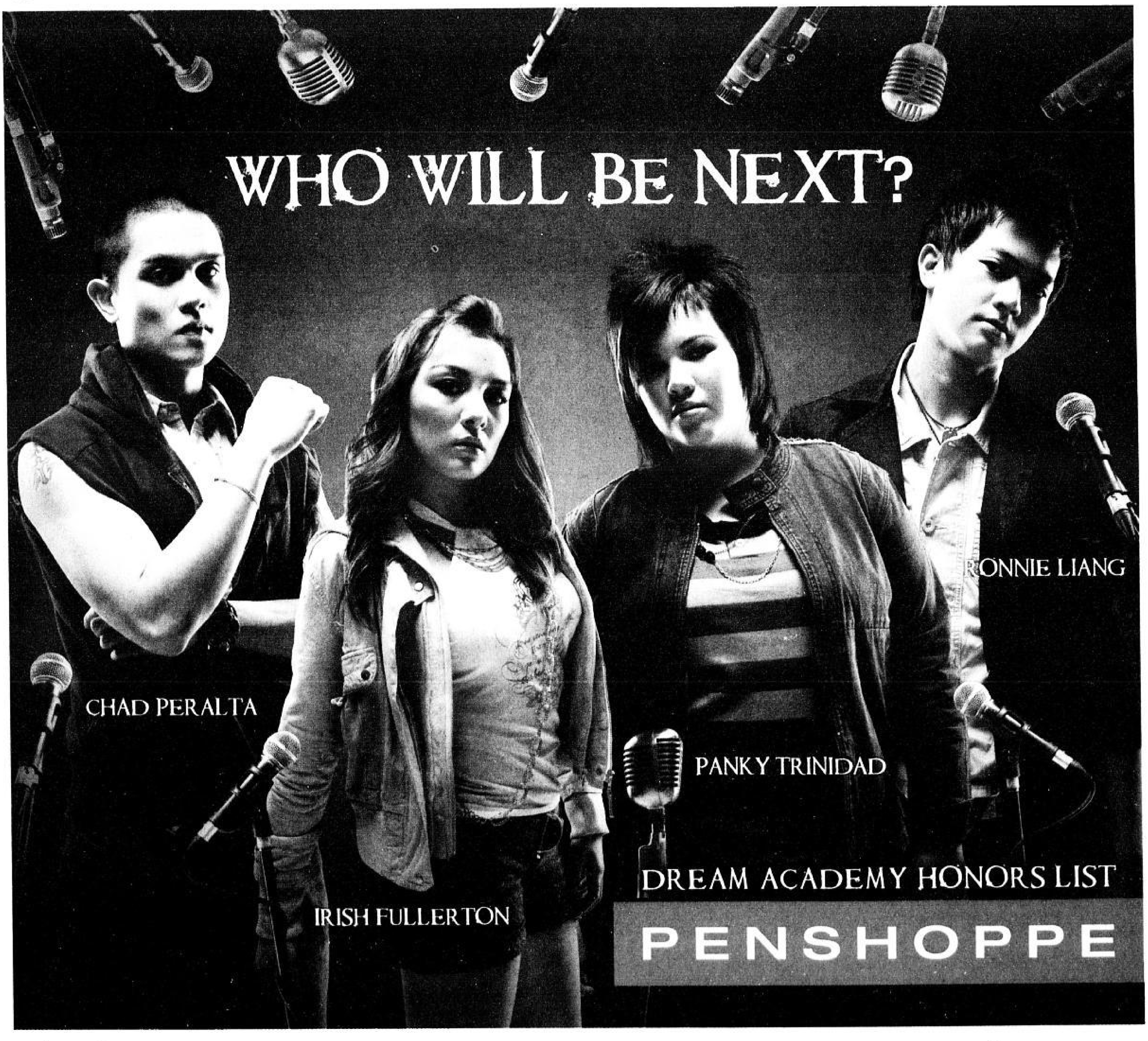


Hayop! It's Super!'s guide to a wild 2007

Read on and find out what's in store for your inner animal in the jungle otherwise known as 2007

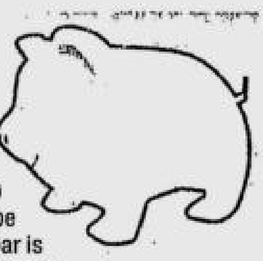
By Marites Allen

IN THE COMING OF THE FIRE BOAR year 2007, the auspicious 8 flies to the Southwest, greatly benefiting the wealth of mothers and older women. *(If you didn't get that, there's always Wikipedia. –the Super! staff)*

In addition, occupants of southwest facing

HAYOP!/ D3

Boar



(1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007)

While this may be a great year, the Boar is considered to be in "self-conflict" this year, which leads to the Grand Duke creating all sorts of problems. You have to think twice before acting as increase in arguments especially between married couples may arise.

Good Months: June for Wealth, August for Windfall luck & January 2008 for Career

Bad Months: July & September

Dragon

(1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000)

The dragon will be breathing major fire this year. There will be transformations and major changes in your lifestyle and direction but you will still emerge as a winner. Investment luck is promising, but you should be careful where you put your money.

Best Months: Feb & November for Career, April for Wealth, June for Money, January 2008 for Wealth

Bad Months: May & July

Monkey

(1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004)

A successful year awaits the Monkey, which includes wealth and plenty of good fortune (and bananas. Heard that, King Kong?) Health issues may decline because of pressure from work. Prevent health problems with the Li Zhing amulet, medicine dzi bracelet and ensure that you have enough metal brass wolu at your bedside table. (For inspiration, look for the karate monkey on YouTube.)

Good Months: February for Wealth, April for Windfall luck, September & October for Career and November for Wealth

Bad Months: March, May & December

Ox

(1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997)

2007 will be very difficult for the Ox. The stars of the year are not in harmony with your chart and will bring serious afflictions in the form of mishaps, accidents, and major obstacles, as well as misfortunes of every kind. You may see opportunities coming into your life yet fail to actualize your luck. Two words—take care.

Best Months: June for Money and August for Wealth

Bad Months: Feb, May, July, Sept.

Horse

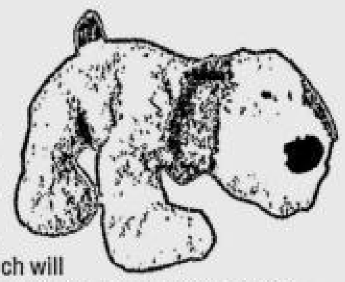
(1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002)

Sea Biscuit will win a lot of races this year. There are plenty of opportunities and wealth luck this year. Prospects for increasing your income is good. Accept promotions and increased responsibilities, as the year will bring many helpful people into your lives. There is potential for strong leadership so giddiyap!

Good Months: February for Money, July for Career, September for Wealth & November for Money

Bad Months: March, October & December

Dog



1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006

Bow wow wow, the pooch will have a so-so 2007. Some months will be as good as Alpo while others will be well, like the five-day-old pizza crust you found under the sink. Problems because of petty squabbles will be common. 2007 will unveil a darker side to the Dog's personality.

Good Months: June for Wealth, August for Wind fall and January 2008 for Career

Bad Months: July & September

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STORY ON PAGE E2

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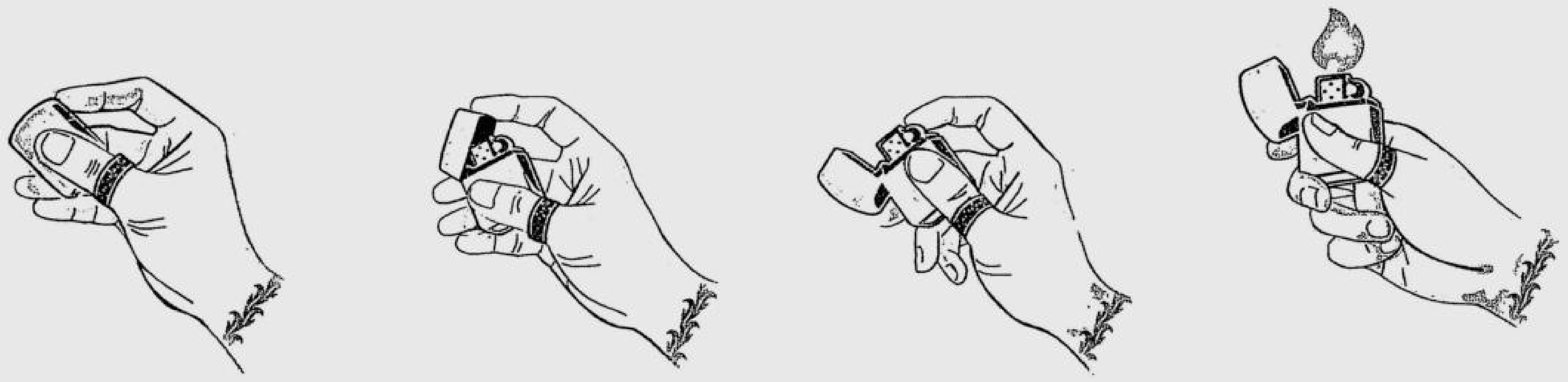

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JACK DANIEL'S Tennessee WHISKEY
TEXAS HOLD 'EM
JIM BEAM
HARLEY-DAVIDSON
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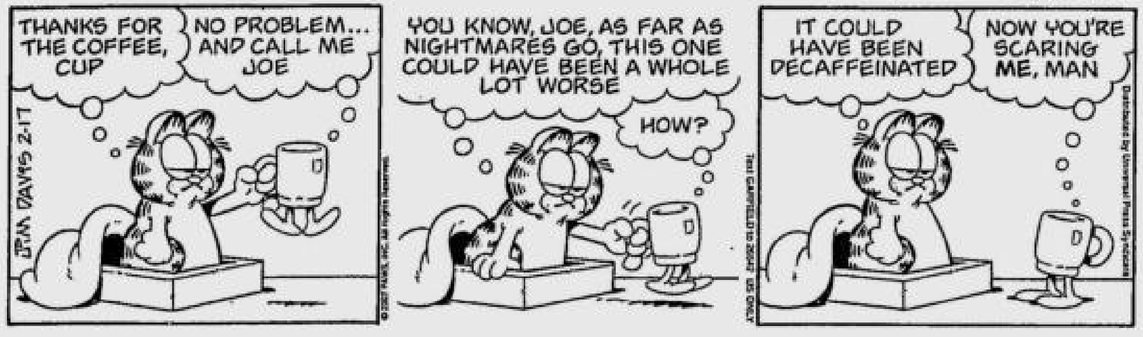
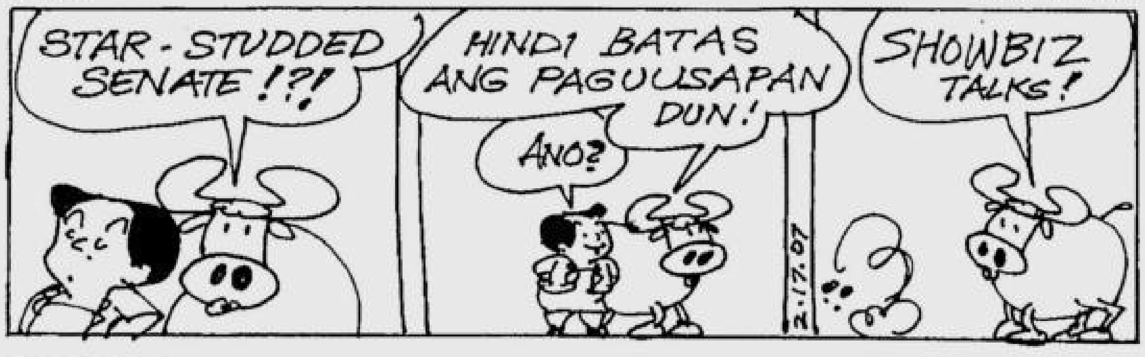
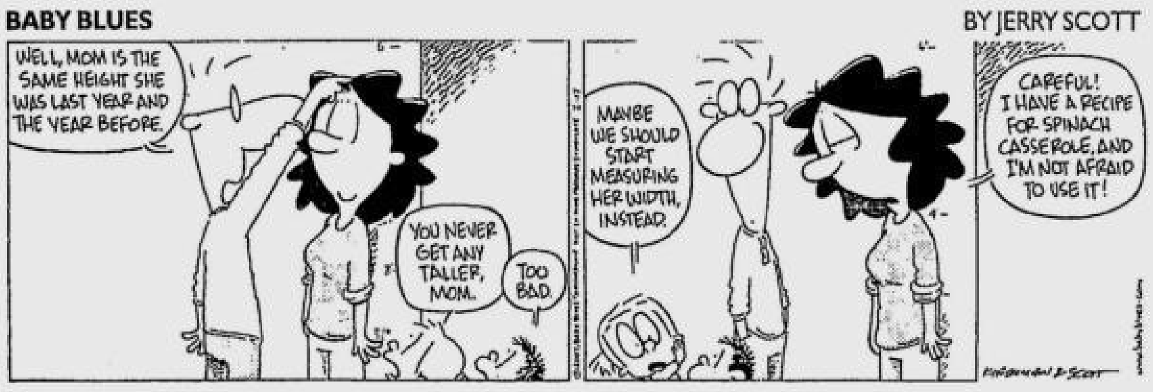
GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS


THANKS FOR THE COFFEE, CUP
NO PROBLEM... AND CALL ME JOE
YOU KNOW, JOE, AS FAR AS NIGHTMARES GO, THIS ONE COULD HAVE BEEN A WHOLE LOT WORSE
HOW?
IT COULD HAVE BEEN DECAFFEINATED
NOW YOU'RE SCARING ME, MAN
JIM DAVIS 2-17

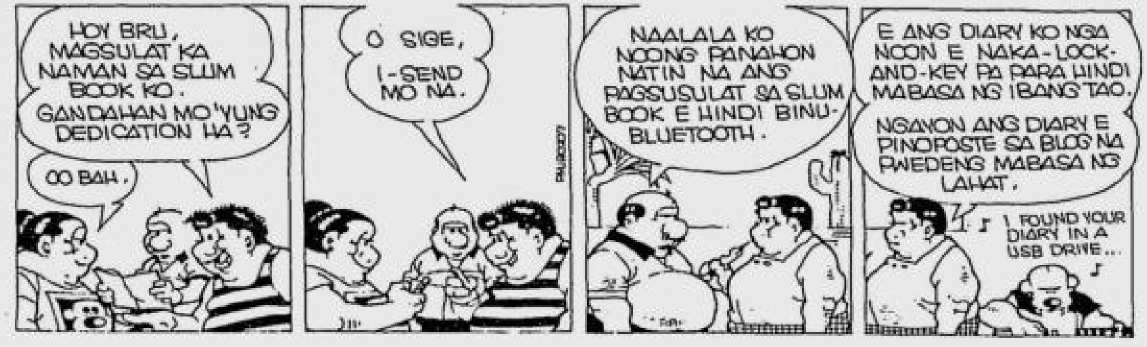
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


STAR-STUDDED SENATE !?!
HINDI BATAS ANG PAGUUSAPAN DUN!
ANO?
SHOWBIZ TALKS!
2.17.07

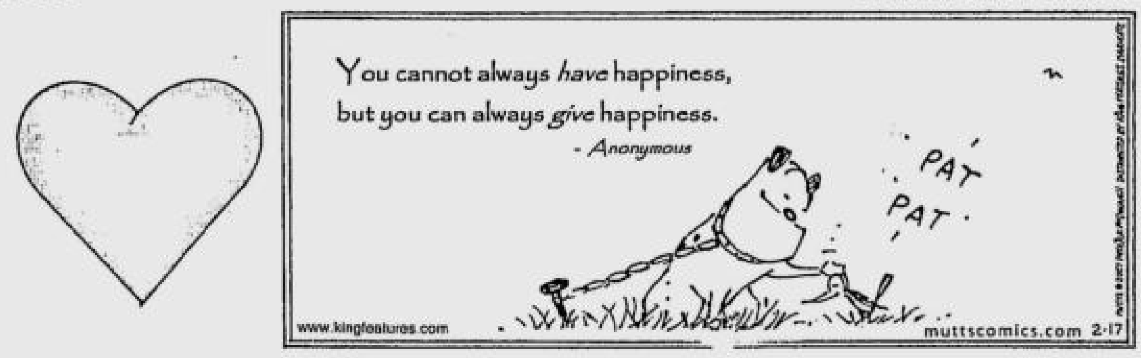
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


WELL, MOM IS THE SAME HEIGHT SHE WAS LAST YEAR AND THE YEAR BEFORE.
YOU NEVER GET ANY TALLER, MOM.
TOO BAD.
MAYBE WE SHOULD START MEASURING HER WIDTH, INSTEAD.
CAREFUL! I HAVE A RECIPE FOR SPINACH CASSEROLE, AND I'M NOT AFRAID TO USE IT!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


HOY BRU, MAGSULAT KA NAMAN SA SLUM BOOK KO. GANDAHAN MO 'YUNG DEDICATION HA?
OO BAH.
O SIGE, I-SEND MO NA.
NAALALA KO NOONG PANAHON NATIN NA ANG PAGSUSULAT SA SLUM BOOK E HINDI BINU-BLUETOOTH.
E ANG DIARY KO NGA NOON E NAKA-LOCK-AND-KEY PA PARA HINDI MABASA NG IBANG TAO.
NGAYON ANG DIARY E PINOPOSTE SA BLOG NA PWEDENG MABASA NG LAHAT.
I FOUND YOUR DIARY IN A USB DRIVE...

MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


You cannot always *have* happiness,
but you can always *give* happiness.
- Anonymous
PAT
PAT
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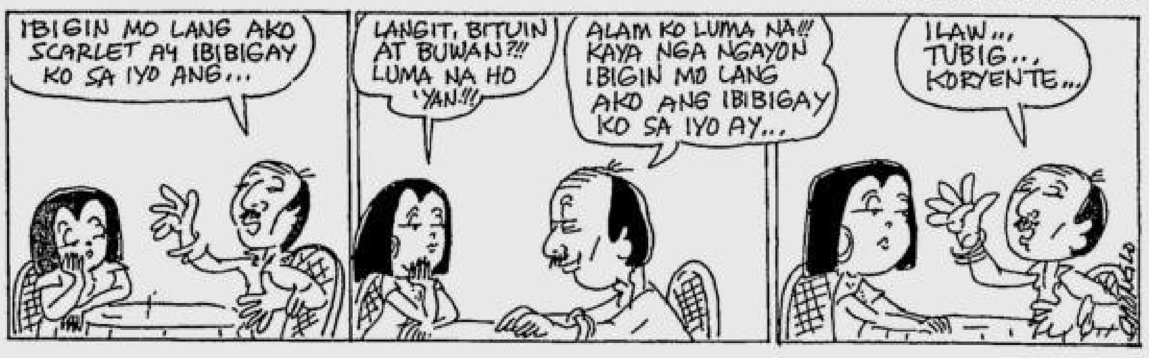
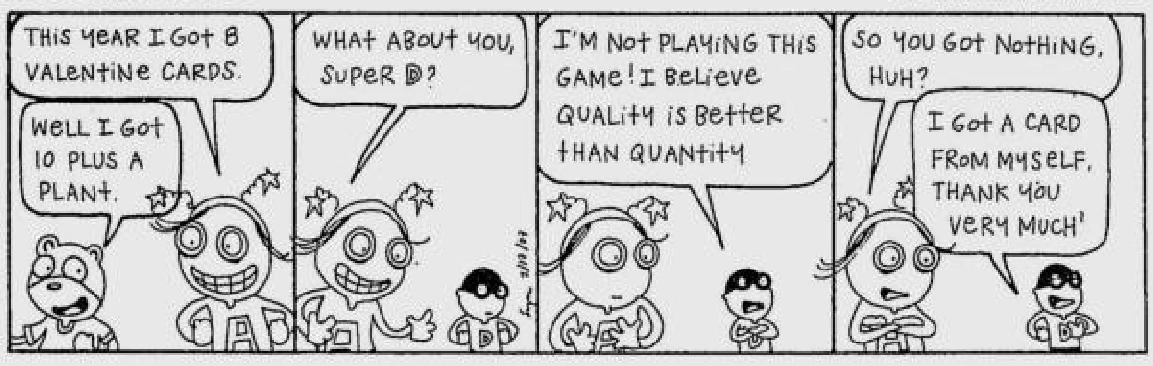
muttscomics.com 2-17

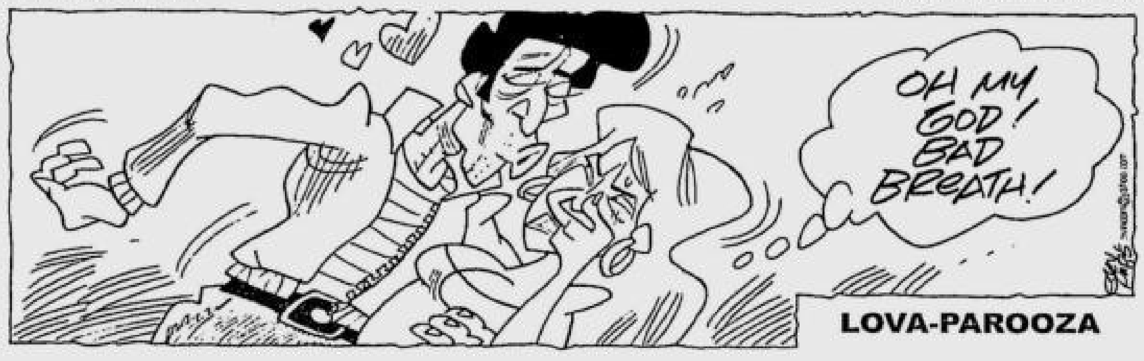
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


IBIGIN MO LANG AKO SCARLET AY IBIBIGAY KO SA IYO ANG...
LANGIT, BITUIN AT BUWAN?!! LUMA NA HO 'YAN!!!
ALAM KO LUMA NA!!! KAYA NGA NGAYON IBIGIN MO LANG AKO ANG IBIBIGAY KO SA IYO AY...
ILAW... TUBIG... KORYENTE...

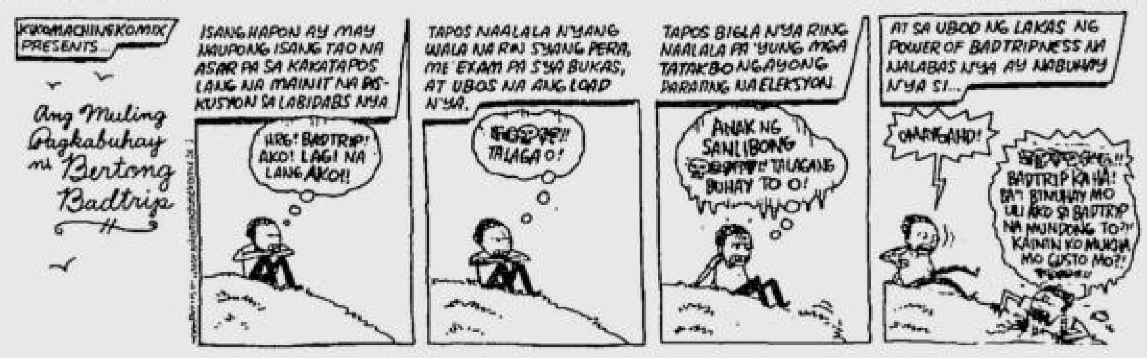
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


THIS YEAR I GOT 8 VALENTINE CARDS.
WELL I GOT 10 PLUS A PLANT.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, SUPER D?
I'M NOT PLAYING THIS GAME! I BELIEVE QUALITY IS BETTER THAN QUANTITY
SO YOU GOT NOTHING, HUH?
I GOT A CARD FROM MYSELF, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

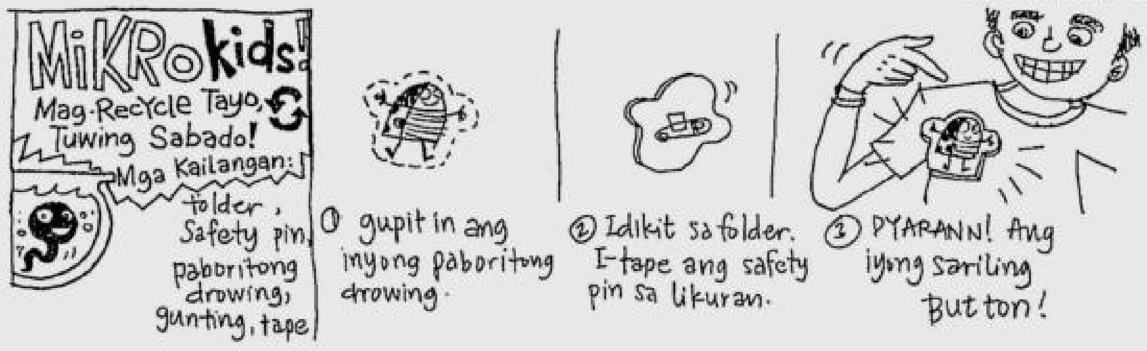
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


OH MY GOD! BAD BREATH!
LOVA-PAROOZA

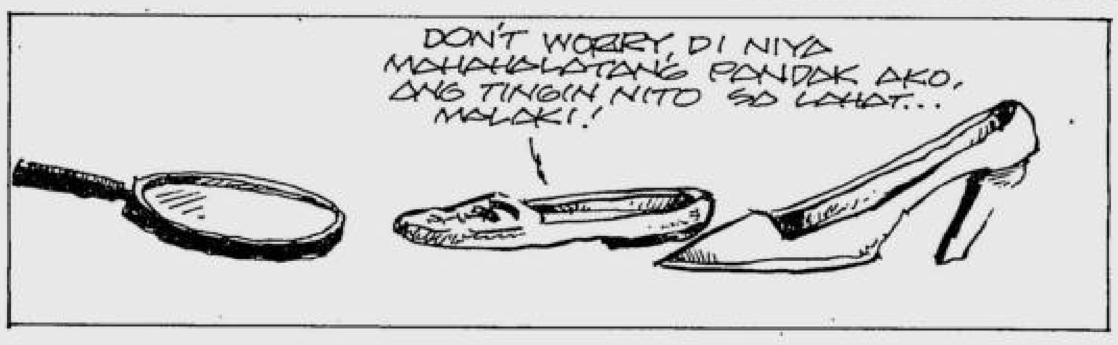
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


KIKOMACHINEKOMIX PRESENTS...
Ang Muling Pagkabuhay ni Bertong Badtrip
ISANG HAPON AY MAY NAUPONG ISANG TAO NA ASAR PA SA KAKATAPOS LANG NA MAINIT NA DISKUSYON SA LABIDABS NYA
URG! BADTRIP! AKO! LAGI NA LANG AKO!!
TAPOS NAALALA NYANG WALA NA RIN SYANG PERA, ME EXAM PA SYA BUKAS, AT UBOS NA ANG LOAD N'YA.
TALAGA O!
TAPOS BIGLA NYA RING NAALALA PA 'YUNG MGA TATAKBO NGAYONG PARATING NA ELEKSYON.
ANAK NG SANLIBONG TALAGANG BUHAY TO O!
AT SA UBOD NG LAKAS NG POWER OF BADTRIPNESS AY NALABAS NYA AY NABUHAY N'YA SI...
OARRGAHD!
BADTRIP KA HA! BA'T BINUHAY MO ULI AKO SA BADTRIP NA MUNDONG TO?! KAININ KO MUKHA MO GUSTO MO?!

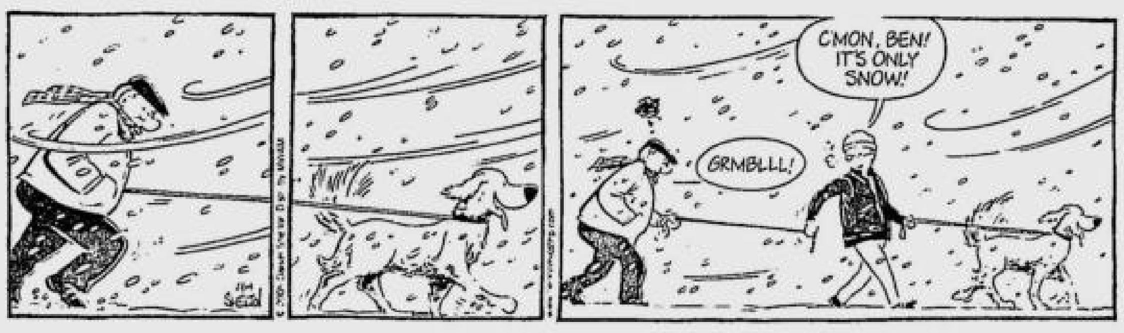
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MiKRO kids!
Mag-Recycle Tayo, Tuwing Sabado!
Mga Kailangan:
folder, Safety pin, paboritong drowing, gunting, tape
① gupit in ang inyong paboritong drowing.
② Idikit sa folder. I-tape ang safety pin sa likuran.
③ PYARANN! Ang iyong sariling Button!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


DON'T WORRY, DI NIYA MAHAHALATANG PANDAK AKO, ANG TINGIN NITO SA LAHAT... MALAKI!

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


C'MON, BEN! IT'S ONLY SNOW!
GRMBLLL!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Team's charm
7 Math subj.
10 Poet Crane
14 Growing above the timberline
15 Roof layer
17 Lists of candidates
18 Carried too far
19 Autocrat
20 "The Perfect Storm" director
21 Cherished
23 Spoke from memory
24 One giving testimony
28 Whopper peddler
29 Loses one's cool
31 Sergeant fish
34 European eagle
35 Bumpkins
37 Harper Valley org. of song
38 Blue ducks
41 Green ice-cream
44 Gardener's soil
46 Lacking portals
47 Roved stealthily
50 Sagacious
51 Separation ender
53 Terminates
57 Estrange
58 Ask
59 Like mortarboards
60 Burnt shade
61 Divorcees
62 No-seats-available letters
63 Freeman of "Driving Miss Daisy"

1	2	3	4	5	6	■	7	8	9	■	10	11	12	13
14						■	15			16				
17						■	18							
19						■	20							
■	■	■	21			22	■	23						
24	25	26					27	■	28				■	■
29								30	■	31			32	33
34			■	■	35				36	■	■	37		
38			39	40	■	41				42	43			
■	■	44			45	■	46							
47	48					49	■	50				■	■	■
51							52	■	53			54	55	56
57								■	58					
59								■	60					
61				■	62			■	63					

By Michael T. Williams
Clearwater, FL
2/17/07

DOWN
1 Ship's pole
2 Friendly nation
3 Practice punching
4 Fortress
5 Union
6 One with a will
7 Perched upon
8 '62 and '69 grand-slammer
9 Fairy-tale girl
10 Roman wall-builder
11 Punctuation mark
12 Old-time actress Adoree
13 Prevailing tendency
16 Concise summary
22 Raise steam
24 Shelter a fugitive
25 Made great haste
26 "Gilligan's Island" co-star
27 Change an offer
30 Plant new seeds
32 Elevator pioneer
33 Bad guys on "Get Smart"
36 Ancient Greek philosophy
39 State of inferiority
40 Medicinal solution
42 Talk-show host Hall
43 Butcher's knife
45 Electropositive elements
47 Blather
48 Loosen up
49 Dissuade
52 Make over
54 Croon
55 Sicilian tourist draw
56 Irish writer O'Casey

Friday's Puzzle Solved

S	U	M	A	C	■	Y	E	S	M	■	N	O	P	E
T	H	O	T	H	■	A	M	M	O	■	A	H	O	Y
O	U	T	R	E	■	L	I	A	R	■	R	O	P	E
P	R	E	A	C	H	E	R	R	E	A	C	H	E	R
S	A	L	■	K	O	S	■	T	I	C	S	■	■	■
■	■	■	Z	O	E	■	A	C	N	E	■	R	T	E
S	P	O	O	F	■	O	L	A	F	■	R	A	I	N
P	R	O	O	F	I	N	G	R	O	O	F	I	N	G
C	O	P	S	■	D	E	A	D	■	U	D	D	E	R
A	S	S	■	R	I	P	E	■	E	T	S	■	■	■
■	■	■	N	O	G	O	■	T	W	O	■	A	S	H
P	R	E	F	E	R	T	O	R	E	F	E	R	T	O
R	O	L	L	■	E	A	S	Y	■	G	R	U	E	L
A	B	L	E	■	S	T	L	O	■	A	L	B	E	E
Y	E	A	R	■	S	O	O	N	■	S	E	A	R	S

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2/17/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a strong spirit. No matter what your background, you're prepared to overcome whatever obstacles you encounter. You're ambitious and realistic. You definitely go after what you want. Self-development is a personal theme in your life. The year ahead offers new opportunities and fresh paths. Open any door! It's time to begin a new cycle.

Birthdate of: Ruth Rendell, mystery writer; Paris Hilton, celebrity; Thomas Malthus, economist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Today's New moon is the perfect time to think about how you can improve your friendships with others. Would you like to have you as a friend?

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is the only New Moon high in your chart all year. Now is the time to think about your life's direction in general. Where do you want to be five years from now?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Ask yourself what you can do to improve your education or training so that you're happier in your work and in your life. Is this a time to travel somewhere?

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Today's New Moon is an opportunity for you to decide how to share something with someone else. Are you happy with the arrangements you have with others? Do you want to make changes?

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This New Moon is the perfect time to set intentions and new resolutions. What can you do to improve your closest relationships?

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is the perfect day to ask yourself how you can improve your job or how you approach your job. Or should you be in another job?

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): It's important to establish a balance in your life between work and play. Are you giving yourself enough pleasurable escape?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): What can you do to improve where you live, and your relations with family members? This is one of the best days all year for you to think about this.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Now is the time to ask yourself if you are clear in your communications with others. (You can't hear what others are saying when you are talking.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): What can you do to feel happier about your financial situation? Are you taking care of the possessions you now own? Today is a good day to ponder these questions.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Today is the only New Moon in your sign all year. That's why this is the perfect time to look in the mirror and check out the image you present to others.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Do you think you have a balance between your spiritual life and your everyday reality? Today is the perfect day to explore this notion.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

1					7			5
			1			8		
	9	5	2			6		
5						2	6	
	8	2						9
		1			2	9	5	
		6			8			
7			4					1

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 2/17

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	5	8	3	4	9	2	7	1
3	1	4	2	8	7	6	5	9
9	7	2	1	6	5	4	3	8
8	3	1	6	7	4	5	9	2
7	4	9	5	2	1	3	8	6
5	2	6	8	9	3	7	1	4
4	9	5	7	1	2	8	6	3
2	6	3	9	5	8	1	4	7
1	8	7	4	3	6	9	2	5

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 2/16

The dude of dynamic abstraction

By Pepe Diokno

THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS I wish I could have at the push of a button-like, um, world peace. OK, no, I made that up. I wish I could tie my shoes at the push of a button. An Automatic Super! Article Machine sounds good, too. The number one thing I wish I did have, though, is a button that makes cheese. Yes, that'd be cool.

But for now, I guess I have to be content with the things I do have at the push of button—like doorbells and Internet por … tions. Another thing is this awesome site I came across one day: it's a site for the Motorola CRZR where a push of a button generates crazy, reflective artwork you can use as your desktop wallpaper.

The CRZR site, which is at http://direct.motorola.com/hellomoto/motokrzr/experienceK1m/, asks you to drag cool pieces of artwork, together with the Motorola CRZR phone, into a work area. It lets you set a variety of parameters—from how big the phones should be to how many "reflections" you want in your artwork. What comes out, based on your input, is a moving kaleidoscope, which you're free to stop and capture at any time. It's also perfect for staring at when you're tripping.

Anyway, what users basically do with the site is use it to create artwork, and that's something we do all the time—with Paint or Photoshop. But what's different about the process on the Moto CRZR site is that it randomizes your input so that the generated artwork is never the same. In other words, the art you generate isn't static like a painting is; it's dynamic, meaning it constantly changes.

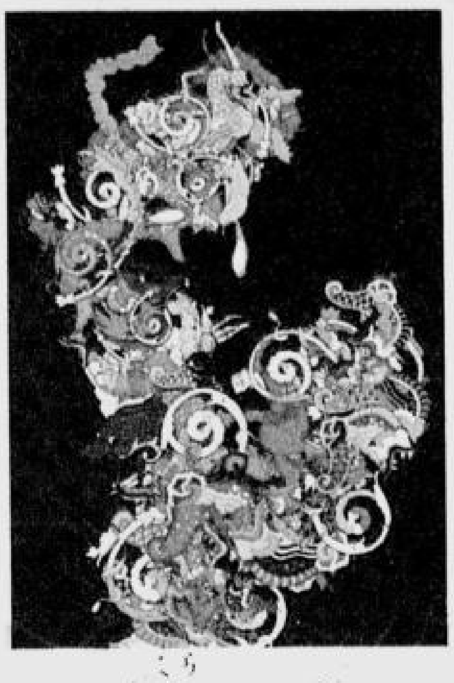
Using randomization within a controlled environment is a new thing in visual communication. It was pioneered by an artist called Joshua Davis. Josh was strongly influenced by Jackson Pollock, an abstract expressionist known for splattering paint (among other things) across large canvases. Josh says on his website, "Among modern artists, I conceptually identify with Jackson Pollock—not that I'm a particular fan of his visual style, but because he always identified himself as a painter, even though a lot of the time his brush never hit the canvas."

Josh saw computers as tools for generating his work. He wrote programs that randomly distributed, arranged, and distorted his artwork—creating new stuff as a final result. If for Jackson Pollock, his art was the process of its creation rather than the final product, for Josh, the art is the code that produces the final result rather than the final randomly generated works themselves. Josh continues, "There's something in that disconnect—not using a brush or tool in traditional methods."

Josh was recently here in the country to speak at the first Graphika Manila International Media Design Conference. I got to sit down with him while he was here—and *lemme* tell ya, though he denies it, Josh is the rock star of graphic design. OK, that sounds nerdy. But trust me, the guy looks like he can beat you up—or at least trash a room. That's where the "rock star" label comes from. That's also why you give him your full attention when he speaks.

Using computers to generate code that spits out random artwork—can you really call it art? Where do randomness and aesthetics meet?

I take on three roles when I do my work. In one sense I get to be a programmer, in one sense a designer, and in the third sense a critic. I put the design that the program uses, and I put in all the boundaries that the program uses. So even



though the aesthetic is supposed to be random, it's as if I drew it all myself.

A few years ago, a partner and I sat down to write genetic algorithms. Do you remember (the website) "Hot or Not?" We actually wrote that in programming. So what I could do is run my compositions and run a side-program that asks me to rate how well it did. What happens is, over about a week it looks at scale, position, color, and composition, and it learns what is aesthetically beautiful for me. So again, as I rate it, the computer learns what I want it to do.

What's your process, speaking as an artist? How do you transfer an idea from your head to a computer screen?

You don't have to follow me in this philosophy, but when I sit down with an idea and execute it from A-Z, I'm usually pretty bored by the time I'm done. I'm like, "Cool, I did it." (Puts on a deadpan expression.) So, a lot of times I sit down without any idea of what I want to do and where I want to go, so it's kinda like free-flowing consciousness. I sit down and say, "Hey, OK, let's write something!" Generally what happens is that the work will take me where it wants to go rather than I impose my will on my work. Like, most of my work, I don't think I could have planned—"Oh, I'm *gonna* plan this 70,000-layer illustrator file!" I can't do it. So most of my stuff is like, free flow design.

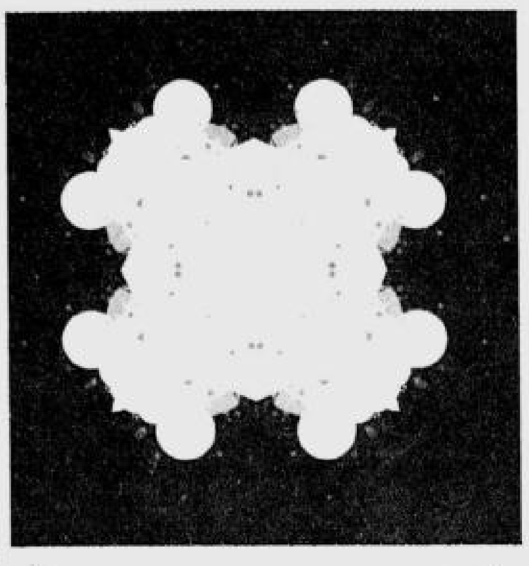
I spend months, and months, and months making stuff that sucks. A lot of times I'll hit dead ends. I'll write programs for months, and in the end what comes out is crap, it doesn't work. But after everything, I'll usually have something that is pretty amazing. So I'm always trying something new, I'm always trying to be open enough to go down new paths.

For me, my common problem is to keep challenging myself. In college, you have professors who say, "Do this, do that, try this, try that … " so you're constantly bombarded with change. Once you get out of school and start your own studio, who challenges you? So I'm constantly trying to give myself problems.

But yeah, almost 100 percent of the time I have no idea what the hell I'm doing.

Having said that about the way you work, how are you able to work on advertising campaigns and deal with corporate clients? 'Cause companies can be real specific when it comes to their products …

I've gotten to a point in my career where a lot of companies know my name, and they kind of know my aesthetic. So most of my project briefs are, "Do whatever the hell you want." Like Motorola comes to me and just says, "It has to be reflective. Go." A lot of my briefs are just one or two words.



I only work on client projects about half of the time. The other half of the time, I'm usually playing video games—oh no, no. Sorry. That's half of the half of the time. The other half of the half of the time, I'm doing research and development. So I'm constantly trying new stuff outside of client work. And because of this, when a client comes to me I usually have like 20 or 30 prototypes of algorithmic programs that generate art work that no one has seen yet. So I say, hey look at some of the stuff I haven't sold to anybody yet, you might like some of this. This makes it very easy for me to sell my ideas to a client.

Generally, what I'll do is I'll show them about three compositions—two absolutely suck-ass ones, and one absolutely life changing, in hopes that I force them into picking that one. Now, there have been cases where they pick the worst one. "Hey, I like this one!" I'm like, "Oh my god. Are you sure?" Other times, they'll ask me to combine all three choices, too.

Another good trick that I do is that most of the prototyping—or sketching, as I call it—is in black and white. I never present color. When I get them to sign up to one design that they like, then I'll give them that in different colors. In the past, I've presented designs with colors, and clients would be like, "Yeah, we really like this one but we don't like the pink." And I'd be like, "Yeah, yeah, we can change that." And they go, "Yeah, but the pink." "We can change that," I say, but they go, "Yeah, but the pink."

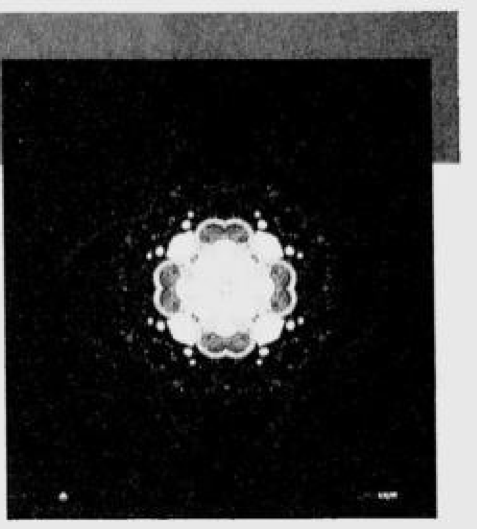
How were you able to reach this point, where companies absolutely trust you and your vision?

The kind of work you make is the kind of work you get hired to do.

Let's say you're in college and you only do the class work that your teacher gives you—which is generally pretty uninteresting—and your professor says, "OK everyone, we're going to make an AIDS Africa poster!" and all of a sudden you have like, 80,000 art students making AIDS Africa posters, and then by the time they graduate from college, and they apply for work at an agency, everyone has that AIDS Africa poster.

So imagine how difficult it is for a studio to hire somebody looking at 80,000 f-cking AIDS Africa posters? So the thing about students is that they have about four years to really do—they have time to make whatever is inside of them.

But yeah, at the start I worked for a studio, and one of my first gigs was doing Microsoft's website. But the difference is, in the States—and I can't talk about the culture or work ethic here—in New York, you might work eight hours on bullsh*t for a client, but at home, I'd work another eight hours on my personal stuff, and that personal stuff is what I'd put on the net, and in a short period of time I was getting hired for the work that I would have done if no one had paid me to do it anyway. Like I would have done a g**-damned kaleidoscope even if Motorola wouldn't have paid



me to do it anyway. Like hey I got paid for it, great!

So yeah, the kind of work you make is the kind of work you get hired to do.

Are you worried about people copying your technique?

My biggest problem is that people are gonna come and hear me speak and do what I do. Please, don't do it. Don't do that.

Keep doing what you're doing. By just expressing yourself—somebody's going to hire you. Someone's going to do it. And you might as well be hired for doing something that you love. What better job than that?

But you have to admit you've started a new way of doing art. You've started a trend. What do you see coming out of dynamic abstraction—and graphic design?

I don't know if I can ever answer that. I do about two countries a month, speaking. And I meet all these people who ask me the same bulls-t question, which is, "What is the future of this industry? What's it going to be like in five years?" Like I f-cking know the answer to that question. And yeah, I own a time machine, and I actually just came back from five years ago, and it is awesome!

My problem with the question is, specifically with design and the way things are going, is that it deters people from working right now. Like who cares what's going to happen next month, or who cares what's going to happen next year? There's no better time than now to start working.

I don't know if I can sit down and think like, "Oh my God the thing that I'm making is going to be the next trend in design!" That totally does not go through my head. What goes through my head is puppies and kittens, and chainsaws, and playing my Nintendo. I don't think about what you just asked me, and because of that I'm able to be open to create something that's maybe bigger than myself.

Visit Joshua Davis at http://www.joshuadavis.com. Photos of Joshua Davis at the Graphica Manila conference by Markku Seguerra at RebelPixel.com

FEEL IT: The Calming, Beneficial TESLAR Effect

Several independent studies show that more people are discovering the wonderful, beneficial TESLAR effect when wearing Philip Stein TESLAR watches.

The TESLAR Effect may result in "improved cardiovascular fitness"
In 2005, a Heart-Rate Variability study (i.e., Stress Test) published in Explore! Magazine suggests TESLAR wearers may experience a more balanced Autonomic Nervous System related to cardiovascular fitness. Measurements suggest after wearing TESLAR, test subjects experienced improved general cardiovascular fitness related to (1) relaxing the "fight or flight" response; (2) increasing "relaxation response", and, (3) improving adaptability to external stress.

The TESLAR Effect may "help compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone".
In June 2002, Alternative Medicine Magazine conducted independent product testing which demonstrated that TESLAR may have a positive effect on the human body in the presence of a cell phone. This test measured Heart Rate Variability (HRV), which can be a good measurement of a body's overall response to external stress. This product test concluded that the use of TESLAR "may in fact compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone."

In 2003, Dr. Nyjon Eccles, MD, saw similar results on patients. Dr. Eccles' HRV tests showed that without TESLAR, the nervous system can become stressed when exposed to an energized cell phone. While wearing TESLAR, results suggest a "stabilizing effect" on or even "beneficial stimulation" of nervous system activity.

Immune cell production increases in presence of the TESLAR Effect in laboratory experiment
Dr. Glen Rein, while at Stanford Medical School, showed that in the presence of TESLAR there was, on average, 137% enhancement of human immune cell growth (in-vitro). A separate test demonstrated that nerve cells (in-vitro) could inhibit their uptake of noradrenalin (a depression-fighting process) by as much as 19.5% in the presence of TESLAR.

Children wearing TESLAR showed improved concentration
In 2001, a 30-day study of 11 children with hyperactivity and attention problems was completed in Henderson, KY. Students were evaluated by teachers prior to beginning the study and again at the conclusion. Overall, per teachers' observations, students showed improvements in their ability to concentrate, play respectfully with other children, relate to adults, and respect authority, among other indicators.

The TESLAR technology is a beneficial effect of the TESLAR chip, the revolutionary chip found inside Philip Stein TESLAR watches. It was engineered to strengthen the body's natural electromagnetic energy field or biofield to protect the body from the possible hazards of external extremely low electromagnetic fields (EMF) produced by cell phones, computers and other electronic devices.

As a result of the TESLAR effect, past wearers of Philip Stein TESLAR timepieces have experienced deeper, more restful sleep; more calm and less tension in normally stressful situations; improved concentration; increased levels of energy; and an overall improvement in wellbeing.

For more information, log on to www.philipsteinTESLAR.com

*Philip Stein TESLAR is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Results cannot be guaranteed as individual results vary.

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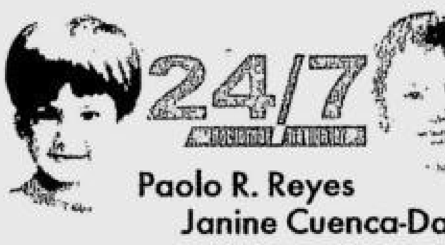
Loud and clear



Paolo R. Reyes
Janine Cuenca-Dario

THE OPERATIVE WORD IN HER NAME is definitely not Lisa. Just in time for Chinese New Year, Lisa Loud—one of the UK's top female DJs—is in town to make some noise and drive away the evil spirits of misfortune.

With an astonishing career that has spanned 15 years, Loud has been dubbed "The First Lady of Dance Music." Her love affair with house music developed when her friend and fellow DJ, Paul Oakenfold, persuaded her to jump on the other side of the decks and learn the craft of DJing. With a donation of records, she soon became his protégé; opening up for him at such clubs such as "Future" in the Soundshaft and "Spectrum" at Heaven.

Tonight at 10 p.m., the lovely Miss Loud, together with local DJ Erwin Edralin, will be turning up the volume at Manila's new clubbing destination Warehouse 135 in Yakal St., Makati. *Kung Hei Fat Choi*!

Spread the love

Get ready for one hell of a red hot dance party as Valentine's and Chinese New Year collide. Tonight at 10 p.m., NBK spreads some love and New Year cheer in their *fantasmagoric* monthly fiesta, For the Love of House. Join DJ Manolet Dario and the NBK house heroes—Antz Santiago, Bombi Balquiedra, David Jacob, Jed Dario, Jon Naval, Marc Naval, Paolo Maralit, and Raji Mata—as cook up a skinny rumble at the Embassy Super Club. Call 892-0689.

135
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LOUD & CLEAR
DJ LISA LOUD
THE FIRST LADY OF HOUSE MUSIC
OPENING BY DJ ERWIN EDRALIN
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2007

Tonight, get loud with Lisa Loud, a top female DJ from the UK

Other Super! 24/7 events:

Feb. 17, Saturday

Kung Hei Fat Choi! feat. DJ Lisa Loud at Warehouse135, Yakal St., Makati; Hed Kandi: Back to Love at World Trade Center; NBK's For the Love of House at Embassy Super Club; Bossa by the Bay at Sofitel Philippine Plaza; Chinese New Year Party at Mandarin Oriental Manila; Apo Hiking Society at ADMU; Pasion y Fuego w/ Lucy Torres-Gomez at Music Museum; Pinikpikan at 70s Bistro; Deep Down & Discofied w/ DJs Karl Ty & Marie Garcia at Fiamma; Sugarfree, Cambio, Happy Meals, and Boy Elroy at Saguijo; Latin House w/ Tribo Manila at Mezze; DJs Paolo Maralit & Cao Ocampo at Jill's; House Nation at Capone's; Rouge: Lounge in Color at M Café ; DJs Jon Herrera & Tolo Bote at Temple; DJ Scratchmark at Prince of Jaipur; Cynthia Alexander at Conspiracy; Side A & Karylle at Metro Bar

Feb. 18, Sunday

Tanghalang Pilipino's The Pretenders at CCP; Andrew Lloyd Webber's Song and Dance at Onstage Greenbelt; Sunday Brunch Affair w/ Concertino at Azzurro Linden Suites; Jazz Sunday Brunch at M Café

Feb. 19, Monday

Happy Mondays hosted by Borgy Manotoc at Embassy Cuisine; I Don't Like Mondays! w/ DJ RO at Gweilos Makati; Chemical Underground at Absinth; Retro Nights at Azzurro Linden Suites; Ria Mariano & Nikki Cabardo at Conspiracy

Feb. 20, Tuesday

Beleza! w/ Nyko Maca + Playground at M Café; Radioactive Sago Project at Mag:net Café Katipunan; Drip, Daydream Cycle, and Bagetsafonik at Saguijo; Lounge Night w/ Zenaida Celdran at Mezze; Bayang Barrios, Cooky Chua, and Aiza Seguerra at Conspiracy; Cuisine Royale w/ DJ Manolet Dario at Embassy Cuisine; 80s & 90s Night w/ DJ Jeff at Temple; Guarana at Café Havana Greenbelt; Tito Duran at Azzurro Linden Suites

Feb. 21, Wednesday

Martinis Bar opening night at Mandarin Oriental Manila; Giniling Festival Album Launch w/ Radioactive Sago Project, Up Dharma Down, and Paramita at Saguijo; Sound, Chillitees, and Itchyworms at Mag:net Café Katipunan; W Wednesdays w/ DJs Karl Ty & Cao Ocampo at Embassy Cuisine; Amor de España: Food, Music, & Flamenco at M Café; Lush: Smooth Rn'B at Fiamma; DJ Boyet Almazan at Mezze ; Skyy High at Vida Malate; Live Rock Bands at Temple; Willy Wanka's Music Factory at Gweilos Makati; DJ Kimozave at Prince of Jaipur; True Faith at Metro Bar

Feb. 22, Thursday

The Dorques, Sound, Drip, Chillitees, Outerhope, and Chicosci at Saguijo; Jazz Sessions w/ Jana del Prado & Empathy at M Café; La Luna Loca w/ Tribo Manila at Mezze ; Fluxxe: Whatever Thursdays at Absinth; Worldwide Thursdays w/ Soundsgood at Nuvo; SPIT at Mag:net Café; Concertino at Azzurro Linden Suites; Acoustic Blues Flashback at Conspiracy

Feb. 23, Friday

Jazz greats Flora Purim & Airto Moreira: Live! at the Coconut Palace; The Bitter Pill, Indiemo, Narda, and Severo at Saguijo; Latin Connection w/ DJs Karl Ty & Paolo Cabalfin at Piedra; House Sessions w/ DJ Bombi Balquiedra at Fiamma; DJ Boyet Almazan at Jill's; DJ Tony Pavia at Mezze ; MyHOUSE at M Café; DJ Roam at Fig & Olive; DJ Marie Garcia at Embassy Cuisine; Bimbo Cerrudo at Mandarin Oriental ; Jazz Night w/ Skarlet at Azzurro Linden Suites; Gary Granada at Conspiracy; Cynthia Alexander at Mag:net Café Katipunan; DJ Scratchmark at Prince of Jaipur; Jive w/ DJ Darrel at Temple; The Jerks at 70s Bistro

Extreme ice parties

ASTRING-O-SOL ICE EXTREME RECENTLY created a stir with Manila's young party elite thanks to its Astring-O-Sol Ice Extreme Party Challenge. It gave top university organizations the chance to become party organizers for a night and win P200,000 in cash. They creatively conceptualized and executed memorable events that highlighted Astring-O-Sol Ice and take partying to an extreme. DLSU BMS' Live Extreme party, a celebration of extreme sports held at the PICC Forum was the big winner. But the other events—a winter-themed concert, a Pajama Party till you Drop, an Icebound party and an Extreme Revolution—rocked to the extreme too.

RATED EXTREME. ETC's Sam Oh

SCHOOL BOY. Gino Banzon parties in his pajamas

CINDY Kurleto is icy fresh.

PEACE OUT! Ken Waymack

A Toast to Ten

The Chocolate Kiss Café, UP Diliman's not-so-secret haven, turns 10-years-old this February. You are invited to their celebration entitled "A Toast to Ten," to be held on Feb. 22, Thursday, at the Main Hall of the Ang Bahay ng Alumni, R. Magsaysay Street, UP Diliman, Quezon City. "A Toast to Ten" is The Chocolate Kiss Café's 10th Anniversary Dinner-Concert for the benefit of the UP Alumni Association's Carillon Restoration Project. It will feature music performances by the UP Concert Chorus, Da Capo (the café's in-house musicians) and very special guests.

Tickets priced at P500, inclusive of sumptuous dinner cocktails and heartwarming music, are available at The Chocolate Kiss Café's UP Diliman and Roces outlets.

For inquiries and reservations, call 433-3782 , 434-7430 or 412-7876 or visit www.thechocolatekiss.com.

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SNEAK PREVIEW

'Last King' gets ready for his Oscar crown

By Rito P. Asilo

"ROYALTY" IS EXPECTED TO DESCEND ON and conquer Hollywood on Oscar night on Feb. 25. While "Queen" Helen Mirren is getting ready for her date with Oscar, "King" Forest Whitaker is likewise primping his bemedalled lapel for one more accolade—the much coveted best actor crown—for his performance as the iconic Idi Amin in Kevin Macdonald's "The Last King of Scotland."

Rise and fall

Based on the events that led to the eventual overthrow of the brutal Ugandan dictator in 1979, the movie chronicles the rise and fall of Idi Amin (Whitaker), as seen through the eyes of his personal physician, Nicholas Garrigan (James MacAvoy).

In the movie, the flamboyantly lethal African leader finds a personal adviser and confidante in Garrigan—a family physician from Scotland who's doing missionary work in the Ugandan countryside to escape an emotionally distant and verbally abusive father—after the latter tends to the wounds of the ruthless but charismatic leader following a vehicular accident.

The two become fast friends, and Amin soon invites him to his fold—as friend and adviser. Initially thrilled by Amin's trust and the newfound influence he wields in a foreign land, Nicholas embraces his job with the passion and excitement of a boy in Toy Kingdom.

But, the adventure-seeking doctor, flawed as he may be, later realizes that he's getting more than he's bargained for after people around him start to vanish: Amin is not playing games!

Cautionary

Relevant and cautionary, the movie will draw your attention to the familiar political and social chaos the film unblinkingly depicts. Its numerous scenes of strife, fear, violence, oppression and poverty strike a chord, because they "feel" so similar to what our country went through in the '70s and '80s—a sense of déjà vu, if you will. No doubt, those images of violence will make you wince, but they will also remind you of a distant past that should never happen again.

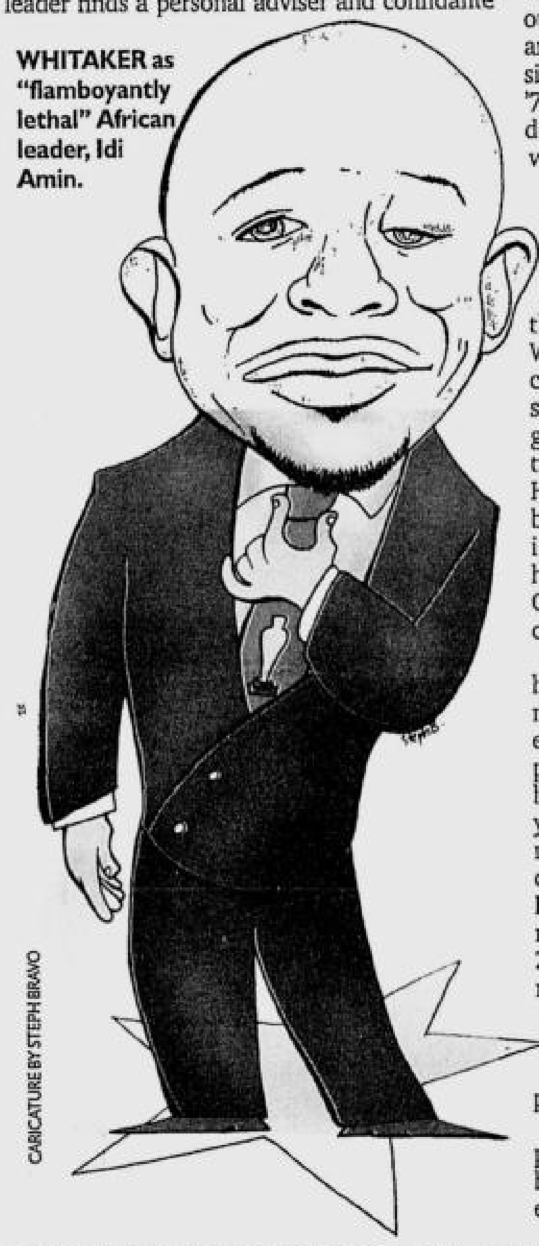
Those similarities alone make "The Last King of Scotland" a must-see for all freedom-loving Filipinos.

MacAvoy turns in a powerful award-worthy performance, but the spotlight is on Whitaker, who comes up with a showy portrayal that goes beyond caricature and histrionics. He finds the right balance between the iconic dictator's well-hidden fears and his God-complex psychosis.

Whitaker should be hard to beat on Oscar night—especially given the fact that the best performance delivered by a male actor last year wasn't even nominated. The Academy chose to cite Leonardo DiCaprio's performance in Edward Zwick's "Blood Diamond" over the versatile actor's superior work in Martin Scorsese's "The Departed."

So, on Feb. 25, expect the "Queen" to have a "King" for an escort.

MACAVOY AND WHITAKER. The Scottish adviser soon discovers that the despot isn't playing games.



WHITAKER as "flamboyantly lethal" African leader, Idi Amin.

CARICATURE BY STEPH BRAVO

Mowelfund pays tribute to local movie icons

By Remy M. Umerez

TO CELEBRATE 110 YEARS OF Philippine cinema, Mowelfund pays homage to the pillars of the local film industry via the Ani Awards on Feb. 23 at the Aliw theater.

Don Jose Nepomuceno, National Artist Atang dela Rama, the love team of Rogelio dela Rosa and Carmen Rosales, and Rosa del Rosario will be honored for their contributions to the film industry. The event will also pay homage to Fernando Poe Jr., Dolphy and Joseph Estrada, the founder of Mowelfund.

Nepomuceno, the acknowledged father of Philippine movies, founded Malayan Films in 1917. He served as its producer, scriptwriter, director, camera and laboratory man, and distributor.

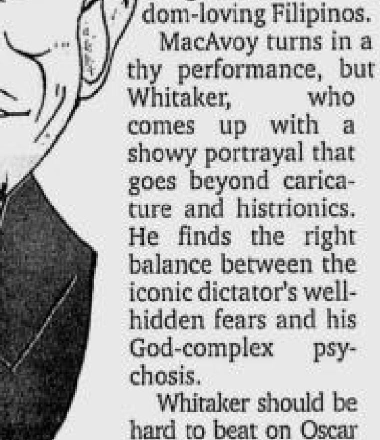
Dela Rama was queen of the *kundiman* and *sarswela* who captivated the audience with her charisma. Nepomuceno got her for the lead role of his movie version of "Dalagang Bukid" (1919).

Household name

Del Rosario appeared in 60 photoplays. Her live-action portrayal of "Darna" in 1951 made her and the character a household name. The first Darna movie was directed by Fernando Poe Sr. under Royal Films.

In their time, the love team of Rogelio dela Rosa and Carmen Rosales was unbeatable. The couple's stellar pairing in "Maalaala Mo Kaya" is one of the classics from the Golden Era of Filipino films. Rosales played the role of Dela Rosa's martyr lover, establishing her status as the highest paid Filipino actress of her time.

Mowelfund owes its existence to former President Joseph Estrada, who championed the movie workers' cause. The guy known as Erap has appeared in more than 100 movies and produced over 70 films. Dolphy is, without a doubt, show biz's all-time King of Comedy.



DELA RAMA. *Sarswela* **queen and National Artist.**

Soft spot

Fernando Poe Jr., the King of Philippine Movies, had a soft spot for the less privileged in the industry. His pride in his own field of art had inspired FPJ to direct

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The boy with nine lives

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

READING MY ARTICLE about Gary (the brother whom we buried last Feb. 10), *Kuya* Nestor from Vancouver shares these recollections about our departed sibling:

"His condition started at the height of World War II when our family, together with other residents who wanted to evade the Japanese soldiers, crossed Laguna de Bay in dugout canoes (as the American forces started shelling the town of Los Baños). Luckily, we reached the other side safely."

Condition

With a broken pelvis at age one (not noticed till Gary was three, when he did not start to walk), he had an overdoes of penicillin before we discovered his condition. Almost dead, he just started to move his lips. Then, our father shoved a teaspoon of *lugaw* (porridge) into his mouth, and he started eating.

We had to bring Gary daily to a *hilot* in Bucal, Calamba, Laguna—a rigorous sacrifice for all of us for many years. The "treatment" didn't work, so we brought him to the Manila Orthopedic Hospital,

THE BOY/ F3

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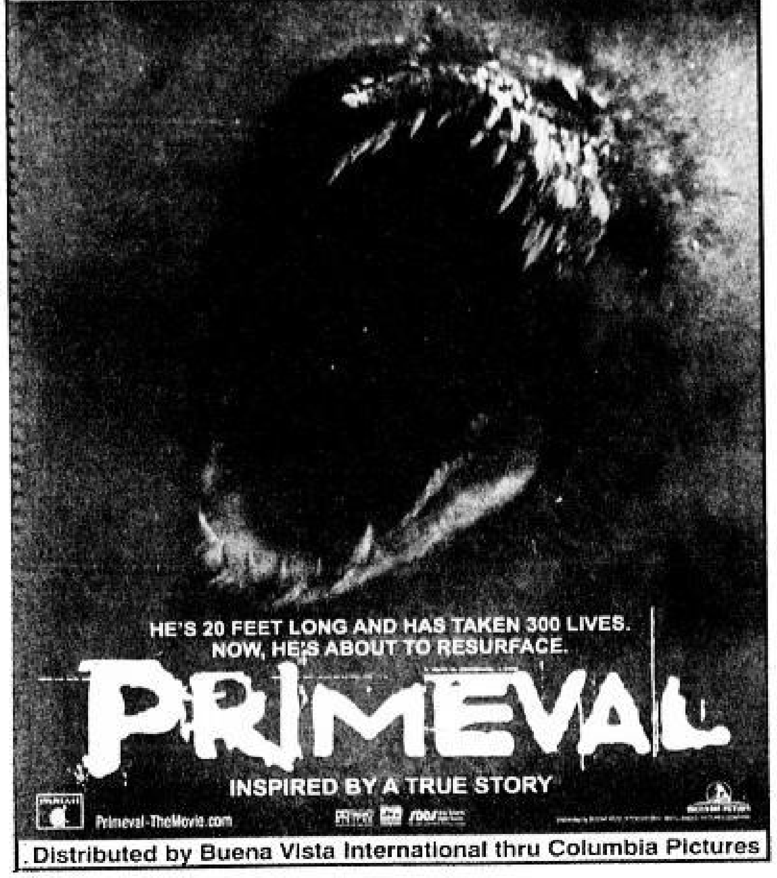
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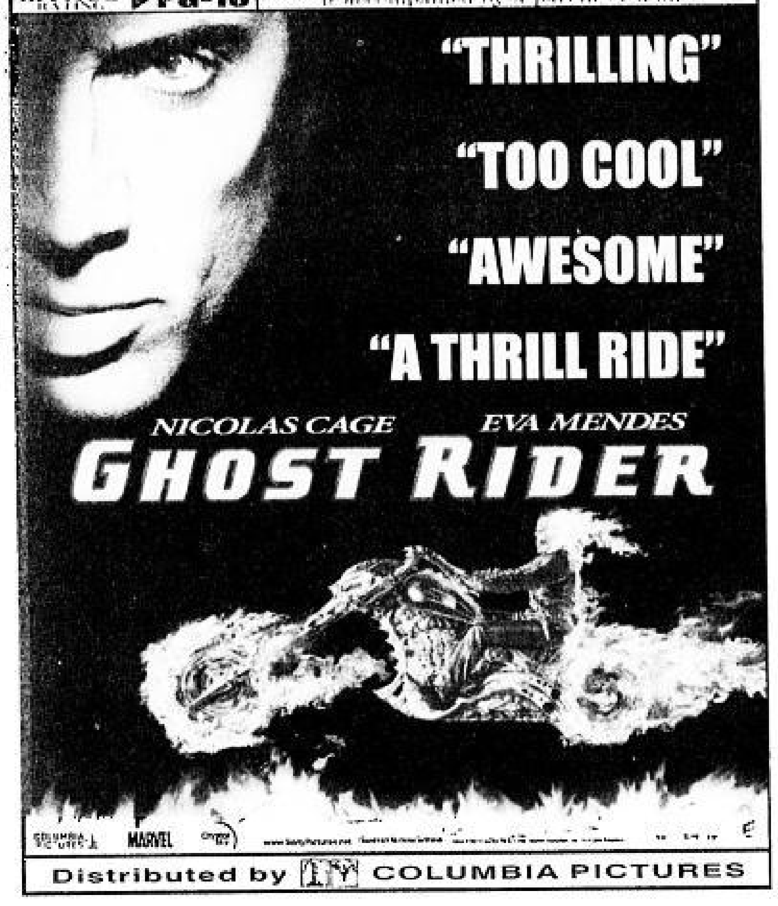
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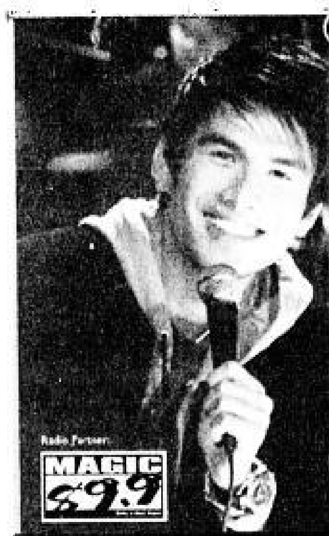
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2	GHOST RIDER 1:40, 4:45, 7:50, 10:55 PG-13	
3	MUSIC & LYRICS 12:55, 3:20, 5:55, 8:30, 11:00 PG-13	
4	THE FOUNTAIN 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:50 PG-13	MUSIC & LYRICS 11:40 PG-13

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	3 THE HISTORY BOYS GUARANTEED SEATS	4 GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	5 THE FOUNTAIN GUARANTEED SEATS	
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	3 THE FOUNTAIN	4 THE HOLIDAY	5 THE PROMISE	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 GHOST RIDER	2 MUSIC & LYRICS	3 THE PROMISE	4 THE MESSENGERS
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	3 THE MESSENGERS	4 GHOST RIDER	5 MUSIC & LYRICS	

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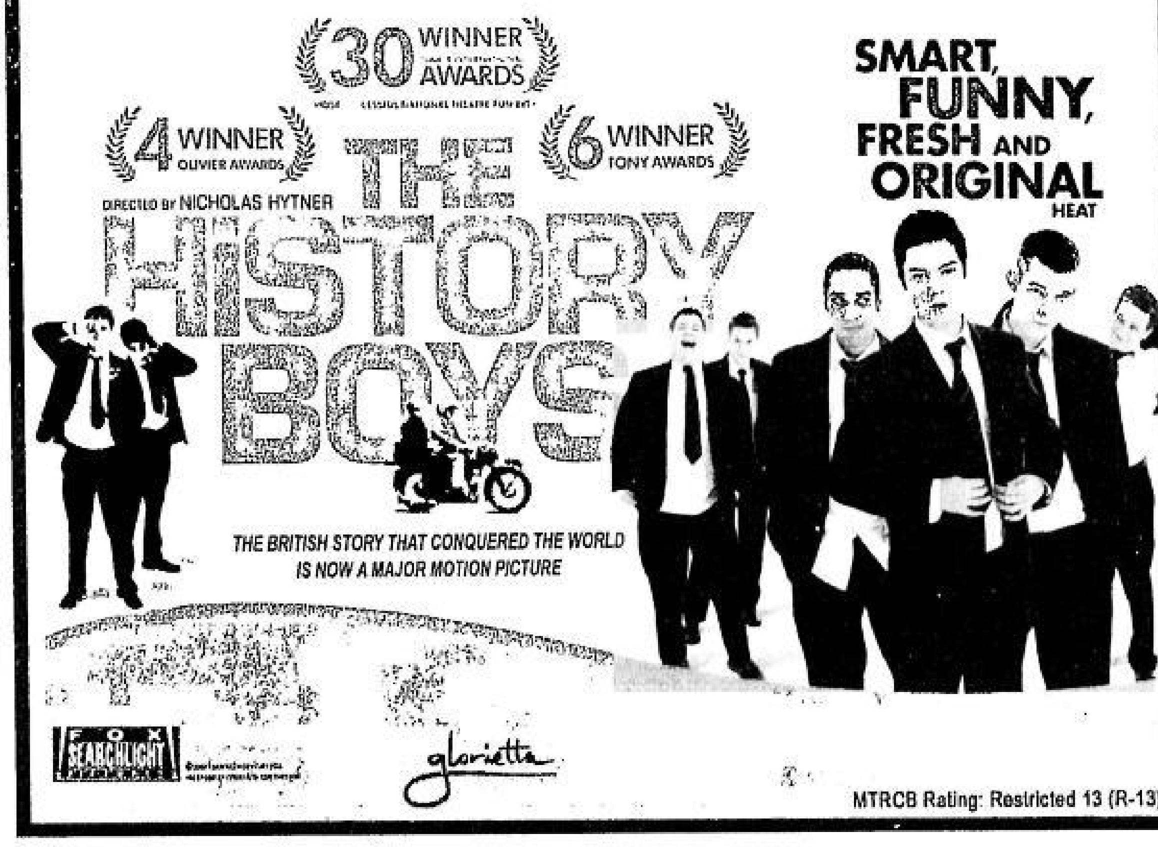
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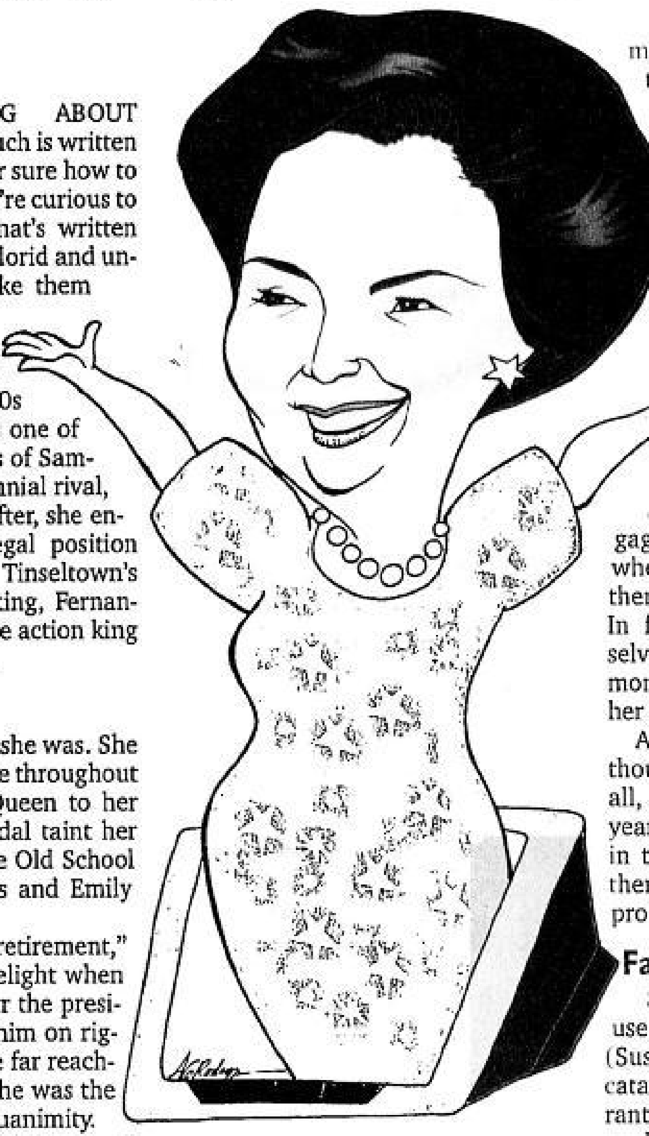
Susan Roces moves on

By Behn Cervantes


ROCES. The epitome of poise and equanimity—but capable of a bracing feistiness, when needed.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT icons. No matter how much is written about them, you're never sure how to tell fact from fiction. You're curious to know more because what's written about them is often too florid and unreal. Publicity only make them bigger than life.

There's no doubt Susan Roces is an icon of local show biz. In the '50s and '60s, she reigned as one of the box-office princesses of Sampaguita, alongside perennial rival, Amalia Fuentes. Thereafter, she enjoyed a permanent, regal position when she married Tinseltown's undisputed box-office king, Fernando Poe Jr. In fact, the late action king called his wife Queenie.

Queenly

And queenly, indeed, she was. She carried herself with poise throughout the decades she was Queen to her King. Never did a scandal taint her name. She was from the Old School of John Roberts Powers and Emily Post.

After years of "semi-retirement," she returned to the limelight when her late husband ran for the presidency. She was beside him on rigorous sorties held in the far reaches of the archipelago. She was the epitome of poise and equanimity.

When FPJ unexpectedly passed away two years ago, she again found herself on the front pages. She echoed his accusation that election fraud was the reason for his defeat. People asked: Is this the real Susan Roces?

Serene presence

On several occasions, she exhibited a feistiness not ordinarily associated with her serene presence. She lambasted her late husband's political rivals and insisted it was time to be truthful. Was she entering the political arena?, others wondered.

So, when Ali Sotto scored a guesting coup by having Susan as her Valentine show guest on "Ali," I eagerly watched. The TV host was smart enough not to keep her guest sedentary in the studio. Instead, Roces was shot among FPJ's memorabilia in the Poe Museum, plus snippets of scenes from their movies together.

I found the former movie queen more dynamic in the studio, though. She was quick to put Ali in her place. The lady was in charge—and a true pro!

Energetic host

Ali is an energetic host, so she would often prod Susan to say more. But, FPJ's widow adroitly put Sotto's leading questions in the proper context. Graciously, she didn't discuss politics but instead, she shared revelations about herself and her past.

Susan revealed that she was engaged to a non-showbiz personality when she met Poe. Yes, she admitted there were kinks in the relationship. In fact, they had distanced themselves from each other for three months before the King convinced her to elope.

Ali asked, did Roces have second thoughts? No, she answered. After all, she was 27 and he was over 30 years when he proposed. Being pros in the same field, it was easier for them to iron out personal and marital problems.

Favorite meals

She also revealed the "trick" she used to feed him his favorite meals. (Susan told the TV host that she had catalogued different 24-hour restaurants and their specialties so she could order whatever he wanted.)

Ali asked if virginity was a gift she gave her husband, Roces confirmed that she followed the moral standards of her day. Sotto then asked how she felt about Poe having a son by another woman. Susan said that, at the time, understanding and acceptance were required.

The discussion was a thoroughly delightful viewing experience with the iconic lady we thought we knew well enough. The Susan Roces who guested on Ali's show was intelligent and humorous. She showed that she's moved on!

Juliana Palermo treasures working with Romero

By Ronald G. Mangubat

PALERMO. Role of a lifetime.

IN "FACES OF LOVE," SEXY ACTress Juliana Palermo plays the role of Skip, a romantic and stubborn lady who falls in love with a criminal defense attorney played by Alfred Vargas.

In the course of her romantic tryst with the legal eagle, Skip does something to help her widower uncle find the love of his life.

"At first, everything in the story is seemingly normal—then, the plot thickens," recalls Palermo. "I accepted the role because it's not only challenging, it also gave me the rare privilege of working with the brilliant Eddie Romero."

Nervous

Palermo admits to being nervous during the first shooting day. "Who wouldn't?," she asks. "Romero is our National Artist for Film! I thought he was strict, so I stayed quiet and made sure I was on time. But, I was proven wrong. He was so cool on the set—and he cracked jokes."

For 10 days, Palermo recounts, local show biz's oldest living Filipino director allowed his impressive ensemble, which included Christopher de Leon, Angel Aquino, Bembol Roco, Chanda Romero and Jackie Aquino, to interpret their respective roles the way they deemed fit.

"He simply explained to us what our characters were, but he did not tell us how they should be acted out. He trusted our artistic judgment," she adds.

The sexy actress, who was last seen in the hit comedy film, "Agent X-44," said that one thing that endeared her to Romero was the fact that both of them come from the Visayas. "We both have a degree of difficulty in speaking Tagalog—that sort of bonded us. He is soft-spoken and funny, at the same time. He's very *kalog*!"

Palermo, who was noticed in films like "Panaghoy sa Suba," "Kaleldo," "Xerox" and "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo," is proud of her latest movie, if only for the fact that she has starred in an Eddie Romero film.

She shares: "I'm proud of all the films that I have appeared in, but this one is particularly special because, many years from now, I can look back and say that I was once directed by the great National Artist in his very first digital film!"

Mowelfund pays tribute . . .

From page F1

DOLPHY. Charity without publicity.

his own movies under the pseudonym, Ronwaldo Reyes.

In 1974, Erap, FPJ and Dolphy discovered through casual exchange of pleasantries that they were consistently but quietly out doling out funds for the marginalized sector of their beloved industry. Those "contributions" went to scholarships, hospitalization, medication and death benefits. So, the industry's three leaders decided to institutionalize a welfare assistance program for their colleagues, thus the birth of Movie Workers Welfare Foundation (Mowelfund).

After 32 years, and despite a drastically cut subsidy from the MMFF, Mowelfund continues to provide assistance to its 5,500 members. The Mowelfund board, headed by Atty. Esperidion Laxa as chairman, is composed of National Artist Eddie Romero, composer Josefino Cenizal, producer Marichu Vera Perez-Maceda, film director Boy Vinarao, Nick de Ocampo, Julius Topacio and Boots Anson-Roa as executive director.

The boy with nine lives

From page F2

MEMBERS of Gary Navasero's family.

where he stayed and finished his elementary education. Finally, he learned to walk and was released from the hospital.

He then enrolled at Araullo High School in Manila. Again, he was injured when he was inside a bus that turned turtle five times before it landed in a flooded ricefield in San Pedro, Laguna.

Gary was hit by a shaft as the roof caved in. He broke his arm while shielding himself from the weight of the roof.

Children

He was married to Delia, who bore him his children, Garydel, Lindel, Isa, Teresa, Grace, Maan, and Manuel Luis.

We buried Gary on a beautiful day—the sky had a heart-shaped cloud looming over us as we lowered his casket to the ground. We all felt that Gary was telling us that he was already at peace with the Lord.

Delia will continue running the Gary Del Dried Flowers and Bonsai. Text 0915 854-8173, or call 899-1767. The Philab Compound is at the Umali Subdivision, in College, Laguna.

* * *

Join the second trip of the Mandy Navasero Batanes Photo Safari in April. Visit "My Batanes" photo exhibit at 2nd floor, LRI Business Plaza at 210 Nicanor Garcia st. (formerly Reposo), Bel Air II, Makati City.

Email mandynavasero@yahoo.com.

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www.musicandlyricsmovie.co.uk

THE DUO'S workshop at the US Open was attended by more than 200 dancers.

Swing, ballroom champs to visit Manila Feb. 21-28

THERE IS A TOP-NOTCH FILipino dancer in the United States who is relatively unknown in the Philippines. Well, that's about to change.

Swing Champion and top-ranked ballroom dancer Armand Centeno Jr., better known as Arjay Centeno, an American-born Filipino, will visit Manila from Feb. 21 to 28 with his parents, Armand Centeno Sr. and Rhona Evangelista-Centeno.

The Centenos, formerly of Quezon City, make their home in California. They will be accompanied by Arjay's girlfriend and dance partner, Melissa Rutz, and her mother, Sheila Rutz of Sebastopol, California.

Arjay and Melissa have been invited to perform as guest artists at the Red Ball of the Muntinlupa Branch of the Philippine Red Cross on Feb. 24. If their schedule permits, they may perform at other venues as well.

Awards

Few people straddle the worlds of Ballroom Dance and Swing in the United States as easily and as loftily as Arjay and Melissa. They perform, compete, teach, choreograph, and judge dance events all over the United States. They have competed and won awards both in Ballroom dancing and in Swing.

The first rollout of their two instructional DVDs, "Breakthrough Concepts in Swing" and "3-D Dancing," sold out quickly. They are developing another set of DVDs. Check out their websites at www.arjaycenteno.com and www.melissarutz.com.

Arjay's and Melissa's professional dance talents and expertise, especially in Swing, which has more events and draws much larger crowds than Ballroom in the US, have resulted in professional and contractual dance commitments all over.

Their busy travel schedule takes them from their base in the Bay Area of California and San Francisco to Monterey, Fresno, San Jose, Sacramento, Lake Tahoe, Ventura, Los Angeles, Anaheim, in California to Reno, Nevada; Washington, DC; Tyson Corners, Virginia; Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Atlanta, Georgia; Phoenix, Arizona; Denver, Colorado; Boston, Massachusetts, Seacaucus and Newark, New Jersey; Connecticut; Anchorage, Alaska, and Hawaii.

They have also been invited to perform in England and Switzerland.

Last November 2006, they won 2nd Place in the Showcase Division of the US Open Swing dance Championships in Anaheim, California.

Premier dance event

The US Swing Open is the premier dance event in the Swing calendar and draws participants and fans from Europe and Australia.

Arjay and Melissa are much-sought-after teachers and were contracted to give a workshop in Swing. Over 200 dancers attended their workshop at the US Open.

In the world of Ballroom, Arjay and Melissa have been no less successful. In April 2006 at the sold-out Reno Dance Sensation at the Grand Hilton's gigantic theater, their performance of a Tango, Waltz, and Viennese Waltz earned them a standing ovation from the crowd.

In 2000, Arjay and Melissa's International Style tango won them a Supreme award, the highest possible, at the International Grand Ball (IGB) in Burlingame, California. Arjay, also a trained concert violinist, introduced their dance with a tango violin solo, after which they segued into the tango. As a result, the impressed judges invited them to perform at the ICB's gala ball.

Concert halls

Arjay studied the violin from the age of six, and has played in concert halls in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Austria, touring with the San Francisco Symphony's Youth Orchestra. He has a degree in Graphic Arts, designs and develops websites, enjoys challenging his dad to a mean game of golf and bowling, and has trained in the Martial Arts.

Melissa has a degree in Dance Performance, trained with the San Francisco Ballet, and was the 1998 Theater Arts Adagio Champion. She has just returned from Los Angeles, where she and Benjie Schwimmer partnered for a Christina Aguilera video.

As ballroom dancers, Arjay and Melissa were fortunate to have received coaching from some of the best dancers in the world.

Arjay, Melissa and Benjie Schwimmer, the winner of "2006 So You Think You Can Dance" TV series in the US, belong to a select group in Swing called the "Champions," who compete in the Champions Divisions of Jack and Jill Swing and Strictly Swing by invitation only, and are invited to headline Swing events in the US and other parts of the world.

It is gratifying to find a Filipino dance talent not only among Philippine homegrown dancers who are reaping awards here and abroad, but also in other countries, as in the case of Arjay in the US!

ARJAY and Melissa display form that won them second place at the US Open Dance Championships.

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Noble intention gets lost in translation

By Rito P. Asilo

"The Fountain"
D: Darren Aronofsky
S: Hugh Jackman, Rachel Weisz, Ellen Burstyn

SOMETIMES, PATIENCE IS A useful virtue when watching movies. In the case of "The Fountain," Darren Aronofsky's follow-up to his cerebral 1998 debut, "Pi," and the disturbing drama, "Requiem for a Dream" (2000), you have to be in a certain frame of mind when you sit through it.

Aronofsky doesn't care much about linear storytelling: The film interweaves three parallel stories that span over a thousand years across time periods that are 500 years apart. At the center of the narrative is research scientist, Tom Creo (Hugh Jackman), who's in a mad rush to find a cure for the disease of his terminally ill wife, Izzi (Rachel Weisz).

Back in 16th century Spain, they personify Queen Isabel and Tomas, the monarch's trusted conquistador, who's out to find the Fountain of Youth, which is said to be inside the biblical Tree of Life. He has to find it in the jungles of the Mayan Empire, where it was banished by God after the fateful events in the Garden of Eden.

Five hundred years in the future, Tom is sustained only by the magic and power of a tree as he floats in a vast, limbo-like space.

While the film's visual splendor will initially sweep you off your feet, its tediously redundant

NOBLE/ G3

SCORSESE. His time has come.

Oscars wish list

By Nestor U. Torre

NOW THAT THE 2006 OSCARS ARE coming up shortly (on Feb. 25), film buffs have come up with their wish lists of who should win those prized trophies.

Our personal Oscars wish list is topped by Martin Scorsese, our bet for winning the best director award for "The Departed."

Frontrunner

We know that Clint Eastwood is the touted frontrunner for his direction of "Letters from Iwo Jima," but we hope that Scorsese gets the plum prize, because he's one of only a few truly gifted senior filmmakers who still haven't won an Oscar.

Fact is, Scorsese has been coming up with grittily outstanding movies for decades, from "Taxi Driver" (1976) onward.

So, why hasn't he been rewarded with an Oscar? Partly because his films are generally disturbing and edgy, elements not favored in the past by mainstream-oriented Hollywood.

But, adjustments have been made of late, with the world's film capital belatedly catching up with the growing preference for alternative and even "guerilla" filmmaking. So, this could be Scorsese's year, at long last!

Then, there's the factor of Scorsese's age (64): If he doesn't win the Oscar now, *when* will the Academy come around to finally giving it to him? When he's six feet under would be too late!

Illustrious career

Finally, Scorsese has won the same honor from the Golden Globes. That proves that he's award-worthy—as if more proof were needed than his already illustrious career and filmography.

The other names on some film buffs' Oscars

OSCARS/ G2

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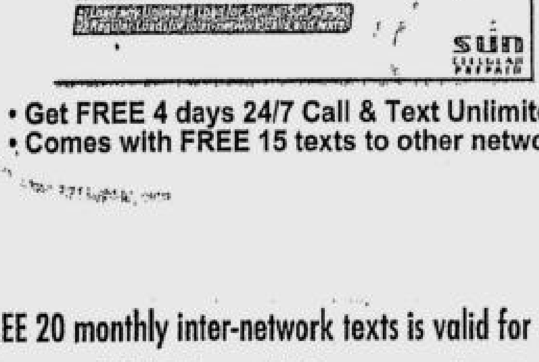
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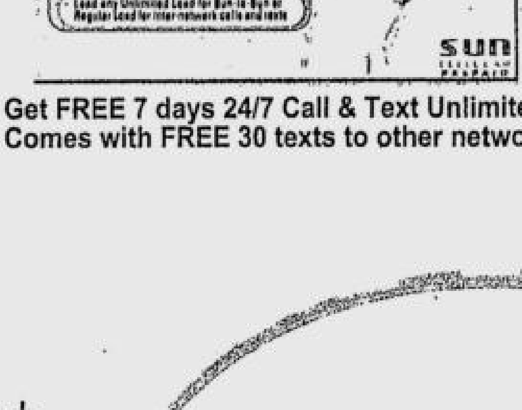
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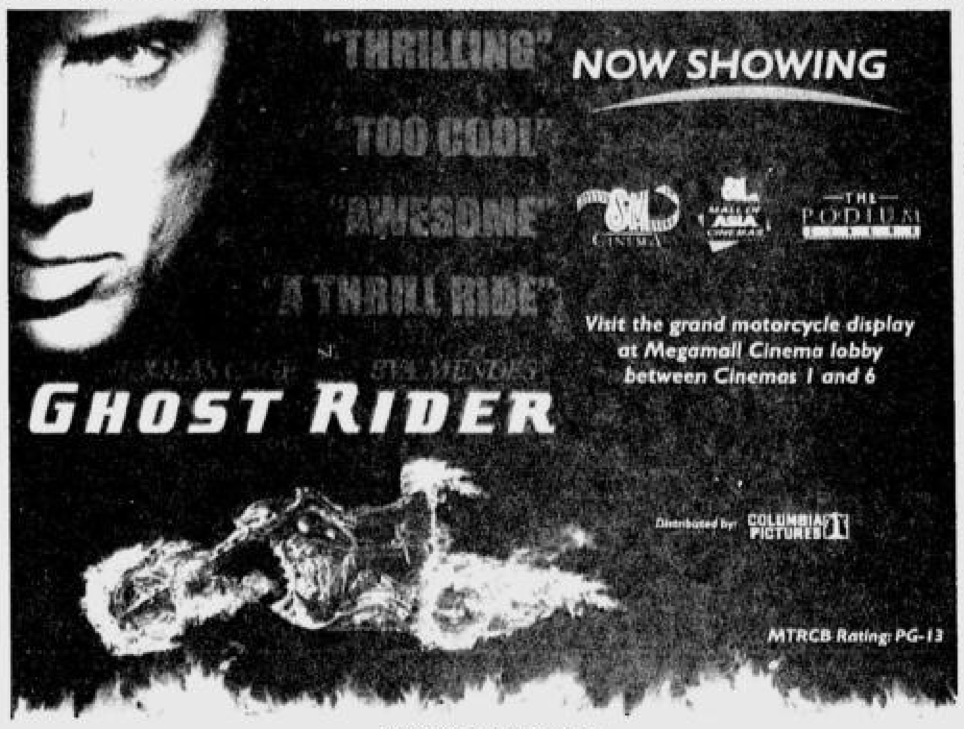

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NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
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10:30AM 11:45PM 1:00PM 2:15PM
Admission Fee- P200

1 MUSIC AND LYRICS
2 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 THE MESSENGER
4 THE FOUNTAIN
5 THE CLEANER/
THE HOLIDAY
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

PREMIERE CINEMA
THE PROMISE
CENTERSTAGE
GHOST RIDER

THE PODIUM
CINEMA 1
GHOST RIDER
CINEMA 2
MUSIC AND LYRICS
633-8976

SM NORTH EDSA 929-5452

1 GHOST RIDER
2 CATCH AND RELEASE
3 THE FOUNTAIN
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
5 THE HOLIDAY
6 GHOST RIDER
7 MUSIC AND LYRICS
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
9 THE CLEANER
10 AGENT X44
11 THE PROMISE
12 THE MESSENGER

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901

1 THE PROMISE
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3 GHOST RIDER
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5 THE HOLIDAY
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8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
9 RESERVED
10 THE PROMISE
11 BABEL
12 THE CLEANER

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749

1 THE PROMISE
2 THE CLEANER
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5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 THE MESSENGER
7 GHOST RIDER
8 THE PROMISE
9 RESERVED
10 MUSIC AND LYRICS
11 ROB-B-HOOD
12 CHARLOTTE'S WEB

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416

1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 THE PROMISE
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 THE MESSENGER
6 THE CLEANER
CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
8 AGENT X44
9 THE HOLIDAY
10 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488

1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 GHOST RIDER
4 THE PROMISE
5 THE MESSENGER
6 THE PROMISE

SM SOUTHMALL 806-8888

1 THE PROMISE
2 THE FOUNTAIN
3 MUSIC AND LYRICS
4 GHOST RIDER
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
7 THE HOLIDAY
8 THE MESSENGER
9 RESERVED

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
4 MUSIC AND LYRICS

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240

1 THE FOUNTAIN
2 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 MUSIC AND LYRICS
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5 THE MESSENGER
6 GHOST RIDER
7 THE FOUNTAIN
8 THE HOLIDAY
9 THE CLEANER
10 AGENT X44
11 THE PROMISE
12 THE PROMISE

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4322001-04

1 THE MESSENGER
2 THE PROMISE
3 TENACIOUS D
4 GHOST RIDER

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917

1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 THE PROMISE
THE PROMISE

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975

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4 THE MESSENGER
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 THE PROMISE
7 MUSIC AND LYRICS
8 GHOST RIDER

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1 THE HOLIDAY
2 GHOST RIDER
3 MUSIC AND LYRICS
4 THE MESSENGER
5 THE PROMISE
6 THE PROMISE

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 THE MESSENGER
4 THE HOLIDAY

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
THE PROMISE
4 CHARLOTTE'S WEB

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1 GHOST RIDER
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THE HOLIDAY
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THE PROMISE
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2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 THE HOLIDAY
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2 THE MESSENGER
3 THE PROMISE
4 GHOST RIDER

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SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876

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2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE CLEANER
4 MUSIC AND LYRICS
5 THE HOLIDAY
6 THE MESSENGER
7 THE PROMISE
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422

BABEL
2 RESERVED
3 THE CLEANER
4 THE PROMISE
5 GHOST RIDER
6 THE HOLIDAY
7 RESERVED
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998

GHOST RIDER
CHARLOTTE'S WEB
3 THE PROMISE
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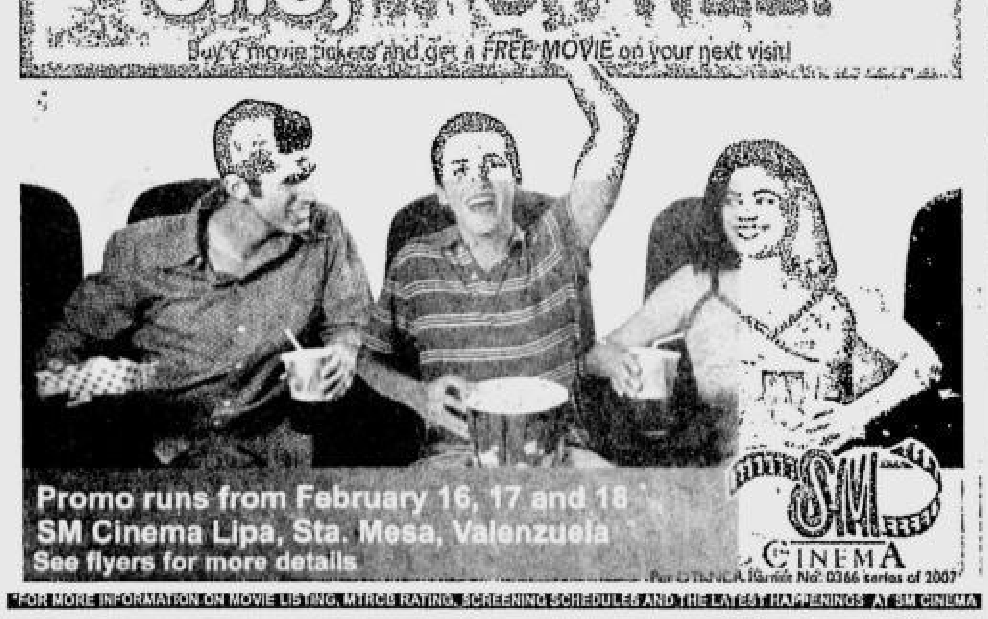

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LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

Beyond physical beauty

WISE KINGS, BRAVE warriors and selfless heroes were the renowned personalities of ancient times. Today, however, modern society likes to dwell on show biz figures who wear revealing clothes or have had numerous sexual partners. This is a sign of degradation, not of progress.

Princes and warriors of the past were attracted to ladies who had subtle charm. But, many women these days like to show off every part of their body, not knowing that shyness is one of a woman's attractive qualities. Vulgarity cheapens her image.

Capacity

A woman's face, breasts or buttocks aren't her most important assets—it's her capacity to care, love and nurture. A woman's ample breasts are not synonymous with having a big heart.

Physical beauty is skin-deep. The skin is only a bag of flesh, blood and bones. Wise sages don't give much value to physical beauty, what's deep inside the heart is what matters most.

Compassion, kindness and spirituality are the true manifestations of beauty. Their value and importance are intrinsic.

Oscars

From page G1

wish list include Kate Winslet in "Little Children" for best actress (over the highly touted Helen Mirren), and Jennifer Hudson in "Dreamgirls" for best supporting actress.

Winslet is much less experienced than Mirren, but a victory for her would be a boon not just for her but for other thespians who "dare" to appear in edgy, alternative movies.

It would be another indication that the mainstream-oriented Academy Awards are opting for more intrepid film fare and performances, and won't be caught by the fast-approaching Ghost of Film Future with their golden pants down.

As for Jennifer Hudson in "Dreamgirls," the actress embodies an even younger generation of entertainers that is marked by much talent and charisma.

Psychic boost

Even more instructively, Hudson was an "American Idol" reject who won her role in "Dreamgirls" even over the top idol, Fantasia Barrino. So, a best supporting actress trophy for her would be a psychic boost to all "second-chancers" everywhere.

But, we're focusing most of our psychic energy on Scorsese's make-or-break Oscar bid. Come on, academy members, do the right thing!

WEISZ AND JACKMAN. Inform Aronofsky's languorous movie with their insightful performances.

Noble intention . . .

From page G1

narrative musings about love, life and death, time, and spirituality—not to mention its sluggish development—pose a protracted distraction to fully enjoy its artistic merits.

Jackman and Weisz inform this languorous piece with insightful performances. Her role is not much of a stretch for the versatile actress, but Jackman delivers one of the most powerful dramatic performances of his career.

We appreciate the talented director's intriguing deconstructions of biblical and historical legends and myths. He executes some visually exquisite moments of moving, gut-wrenching drama and romance. But, his valiant attempt to explore time-worn existential issues are largely diluted by the vastness of his cinematic intention.

Yes, Aronofsky deserves a pat on the back for his effort, but in the midst of this noble initiative is a confounding tale that is overwhelmed by its unfocused ambitions. Noble intentions, unfortunately, aren't always good enough. As the film's characters scurry to and fro in the time continuum, the heart of their respective stories gets lost in translation.

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MTRCB PG-13
12:45, 3:50, 6:55, 10:00

② GHOST RIDER
MTRCB PG-13
12:15 3:20, 6:25, 9:30

③ THE HOLIDAY
MTRCB PG-13
1.00, 7:00, 10:00

④ MUSIC AND LYRICS
MTRCB PG-13
11 35, 2.10, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
THE FOUNTAIN
MTRCB PG-13
12 40, 3.00, 5 20, 7 40, 10 00

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GHOST RIDER PG13 1:00,3:30,6:00,8:30	THE FOUNTAIN PG13 1:45,3:55,6:05, 8:15,10:25	GHOST RIDER PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30

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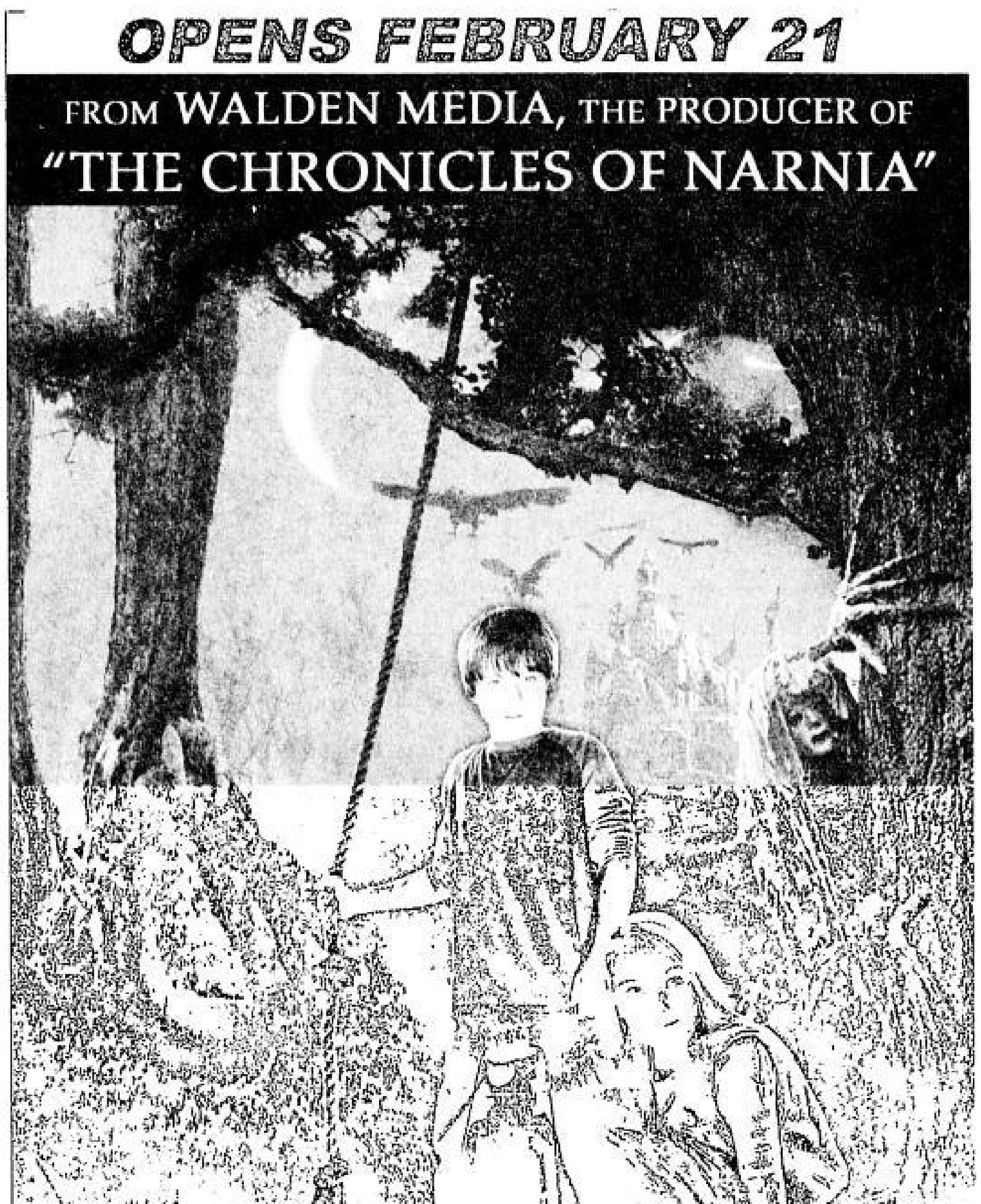

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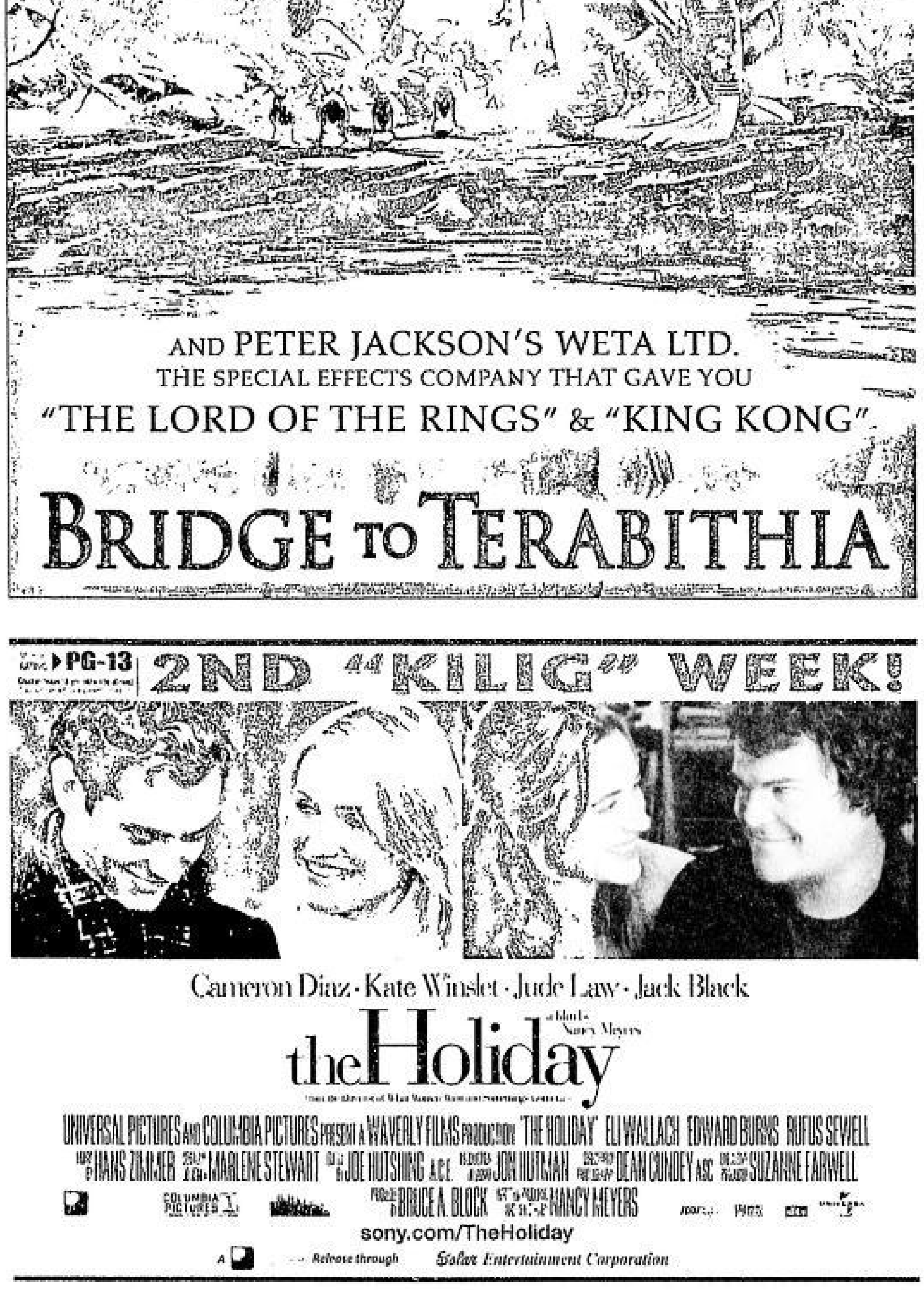

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MOVIE GUIDE

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1 (DOLBY) GHOSTRIDER
2 (DOLBY) GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY) MUSIC AND LYRICS
4 (DOLBY) THE HOLIDAY

PREMIERE
(DOLBY) THE FOUNTAIN

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1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC & LYRICS
3 THE PROMISE
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

starmall EDSA-SHAW

(Mandaluyong) tel. 7268150

3 GHOST RIDER
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) THE PROMISE
5 TROIKA

metropolis star cinema
www.ticketbooth.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504286, 8433684

1 THE PROMISE
2 TROIKA
3 GHOST RIDER
4 APOCALYPTO

THEATRES

CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 THE PROMISE

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1 THE PROMISE
CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 RESRVED
4 RESRVED

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

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2 GHOST RIDER
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 THE FOUNTAIN
5 THE HOLIDAY
6 GHOST RIDER
7 MUSIC & LYRICS
APOCALYPTO / HANNIBAL RISING
9 THE MESSENGERS
10 THE PROMISE

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sta. Nino, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY) THE PROMISE
2 (DOLBY) GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY) MUSIC & LYRICS
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228

1 (DOLBY) THE FOUNTAIN
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 MUSIC & LYRICS
5 TROIKA

THE MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 THE PROMISE
CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 TROIKA
APOCALYPTO/NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Masagana CINEMA
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2 GHOST RIDER
3 TROIKA

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1 GHOST RIDER
2 KAMASUTRA-3

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2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
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3 (DOLBY) MUSIC & LYRICS
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2 THE PROMISE
3 (DOLBY) GHOST RIDER
4

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(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146

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2 RESERVED
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2 THE PROMISE
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2 THE PROMISE

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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Lianas Cinema
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2 ROOM SERVICE
3 KISKISAN
4 APOCALYPTO

Lianas MovieCity
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1 APOCALYPTO
2 TATLONG BARAHA
3 THE PROMISE
4 PARAISO
5 GHOST RIDER

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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 HANNIBAL RISING
4 THE PROMISE

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1 LITTLE CHILDREN
2 TUKSO SI CHARITO

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Satirical rom-com is a cut above the rest

BARRYMORE AND GRANT. Exchange quips with zest, but the chemistry between them is not of the romantic sort.

By Noelani Torre

DESPITE BEING WEIGHED down by a traditional boy-and-girl-meet-mate-and-overcome-obstacles plot, the romantic comedy, "Music and Lyrics," manages to be more than just another throwaway bit of fluff. Sure, it's obviously commercial, but it's also competent, cute and charming.

The movie stars Hugh Grant as "happy has-been," Alex Fletcher, a former member of the once-big '80s boy-band, Pop. Though seemingly content to be performing at state fairs and high school reunions, Alex nevertheless jumps at the chance to stage a comeback when teenybopper megastar, Cora, asks him to write and perform a song for her.

The problem is, Alex hasn't composed a song in more than a decade and, what's more, he has to come up with one in less than a week! The hip lyricist he hires is too far-out for Alex, but salvation comes in the form of Sophie, played by Drew Barrymore, who tends to his plants—who turns out to be an aspiring writer.

Salvation

Alex convinces the flaky, neurotic Sophie to write the song with him, and they hit it off—not just creatively, but personally, as well. Complications, of course, develop soon after.

It's predictable, not to mention contrived, but it works. A lot of the credit has to go to the lead stars' energetic performances. Hugh Grant does what he does best (which is largely being Hugh Grant, *minus* the caddish overtones from "Bridget Jones" and "American Dreamz"), and Drew Barrymore is her usual sweet and zany self.

Grant may be getting old in the literal sense, but not in the idiomatic one—not just yet, anyway. His self-deprecating act still works very well, and his comic timing is well nigh faultless. Though Barrymore is lovely and luminous, it's really Grant who makes things more interesting.

The film's funniest scene is the opening, where a Pop music video of their hit song, "Pop Goes My Heart," is played. It's a scream, aided and abetted by the fact that the song isn't too bad. In fact, it's relentlessly catchy, and will stay in your head far longer than the song that Alex and Sophie end up writing.

In the video, you get to see Grant in shoulder pads and big hair, earnestly popping his hips and shaking his wrists in the best cheesy, '80s good-bad music and dancing tradition.

More glimpses into his character's big-haired past would have been great, but the movie mainly focuses on the here and now—which isn't a bad thing in itself, as Grant and Barrymore have chemistry.

Obligatory love scene

It's not the romantic kind of chemistry, however, which is why the obligatory love scene feels more like an add-on and doesn't really advance the story. They do exchange quips smoothly—and with a lot of zest—so they're enjoyable to watch for the most part.

Directed by Marc Lawrence ("Two Weeks Notice"), the film is light, feel-good entertainment. In spite of the presence of the occasional cliché, it's intelligent and satirical enough to be a cut above the usual rom-com.

'Pepot Artista' makes mainstream debut at IndieSine

By Rica Arevalo

DOY DEL MUNDO SAW MY FIRST BABY steps in filmmaking when I was his student at De La Salle University. I never liked writing much, but in his class, he would use my scripts as examples. He would ask me to write dialogue from my script on the blackboard.

Later, when I took a vacation abroad to "assess" my career path, I learned that he had left Manila for a one-year teaching stint in Singapore. So, my sister and I went to Singapore to visit him. It was a different Doy I saw—domesticated, hospitable and talkative.

Views

He lived by his lonesome in his three-bedroom apartment. He cooked our meals, patiently strolled with me along Orchard Road when I wanted to check out the malls in the area. Day and night, he would discuss his views on Philippine cinema. At the time, he was determined to become an independent filmmaker. It was bound to happen.

On Feb. 28, "Pepot Artista," Doy's first screenplay (which he developed when he was in NUT's class at the Ateneo) and his first directorial feature, will start its week-long run (with English subtitles) at Robinsons Galleria's IndieSine. It won best picture at the 2005 Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival and copped a best actor trophy for its lead star, Elijah Castillo, at the Singapore International Film Festival last year.

"Pepot Artista" revolves around a boy who wants to be a movie star. "It says something about Pinoys who wallow in entertainment in the midst of serious social problems. The protagonist's family is the 'comedy' version of the family in the classic LVN film, 'Biyaya ng Lupa,'" says Del Mundo.

DEL MUNDO (right) directs Yoyoy Villame and Elijah Castillo.

Mature character

The names of Pepot's classmates are derived from filmmakers' names—Miguel Angelo Antonio (Michelangelo Antonioni), Jorge Lucas (George Lucas) and Maria Lourdes Abay (Marilou Diaz-Abaya). He adds in jest: "Pepot is surrounded by film people, so it's no wonder why he wants stardom. The boy's story is purely fictional. The only reference to me comes from the mature character of Pepot, who's a writer, although I never really wanted to be a star."

How is the soft-spoken Doy as a director? "I'm one of the more patient ones—if not the most patient in the local industry! You have to understand the nature of filmmaking. It's a collaborative effort, a concept that some directors don't understand. Other directors bask in the glory of being auteurs and forget that they can't do their films without the collaboration of equals—you have your actors, writers, crew, etc."

Opportunity

Doy, whose last screenplay was 2002's "Markova," enjoyed working on "Pepo't Artista" with Rio Locsin, Cris Villanueva, Noni Buencamino, Jeffrey Quizon, Bituin Escalante, Joy Soler-de Castro, Yoyoy Villame, Lou Veloso, Tado, Nina Medina, and Ces Quesada.

He reasons: "The country has excellent actors. They just need the right material to display what they can do. Indie films are giving them an opportunity to fill that need. Actors can't live on teen romances and soap operas all the time—they need to be challenged, too!"

He wants to invite everyone to see his debut effort, and he has high hopes for his film: "If my fellow alumni at the Immaculate Heart of Mary College (where I finished grade school), San Sebastian College (where I finished high school), Ateneo de Manila University (where I finished my undergraduate degree in Humanities), my past and present students at De La Salle University (where I've been teaching since 1975), my long-lost relatives and friends, and my wife and daughter's friends all come to IndieSine, then 'Pepot Artista' will be a blockbuster!"

—Promise, Doy, come Feb. 28, we'll all be there!

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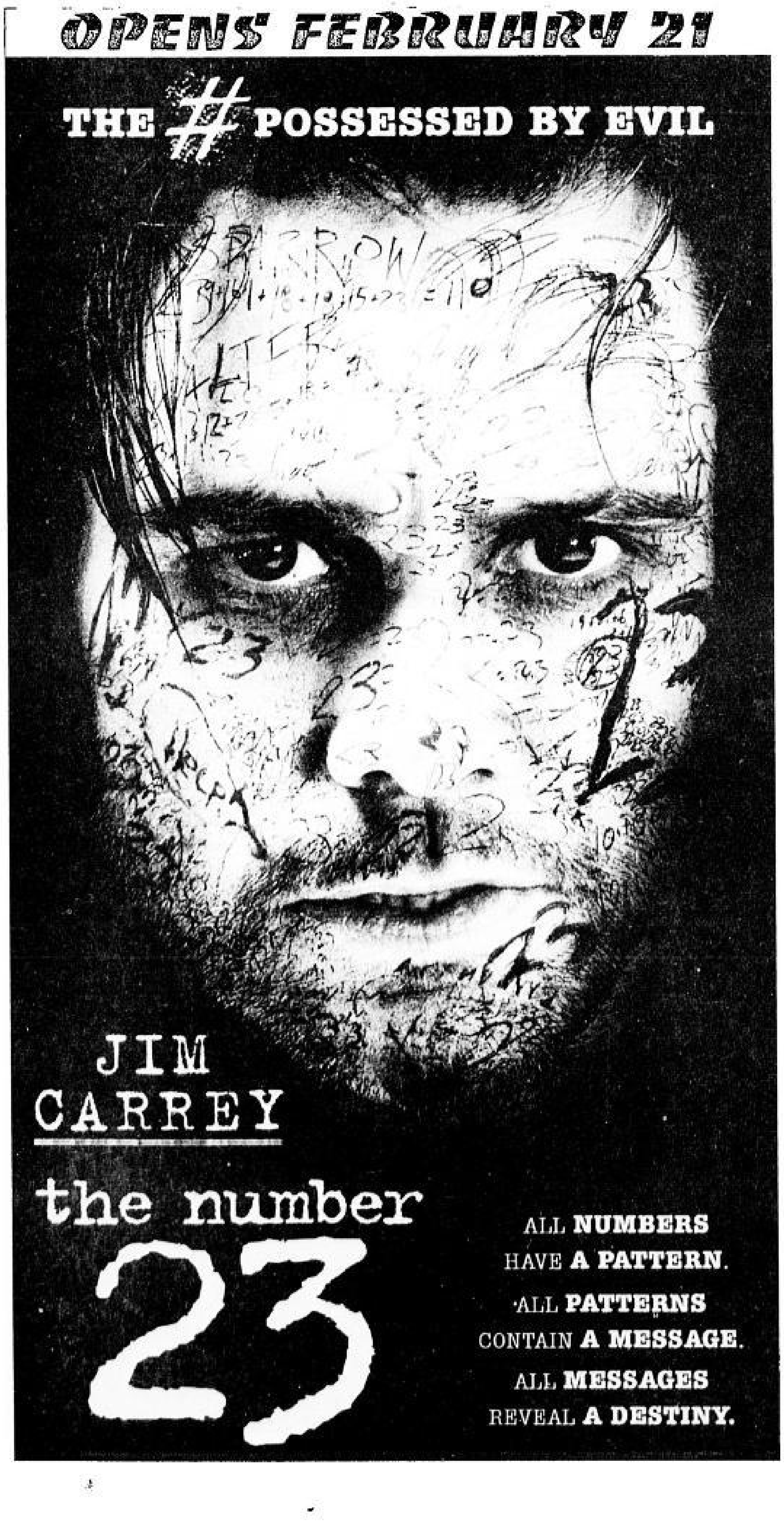

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SATURDAY *Special*

Season for new versions of *hit productions*

By Nestor U. Torre

DON'T LOOK NOW, but 2007 is shaping up as the season for new film or TV versions of old movies. "The Promise," starring Richard Gutierrez and Angel Locsin, takes its cue from "Wuthering Heights" and then "Hihintayin Kita sa Langit," which topbilled Dawn Zulueta and Richard Gomez.

Recently, a plan was floated to remake Sharon Cuneta's early starrer "Dear Heart" with Sarah Geronimo playing Ate Shawie's role. But Sharon made known her misgivings about the idea, so the plan has been put on hold.

And, on TV, the new soap, "Pahiram ng Pag-ibig," breathes new life into Vilma Santos' hit dramatic film starrer, with Rica Peralejo essaying Vilma's part. Alas, the move was recently questioned by Vilma's fans, some of whom felt that Rica was too

SEASON/H3

DOES Rica Peralejo (above) have what it takes to step into Vilma Santos' shoes in the new TV version of Santos' hit film, "Pahiram ng Pag-ibig"?

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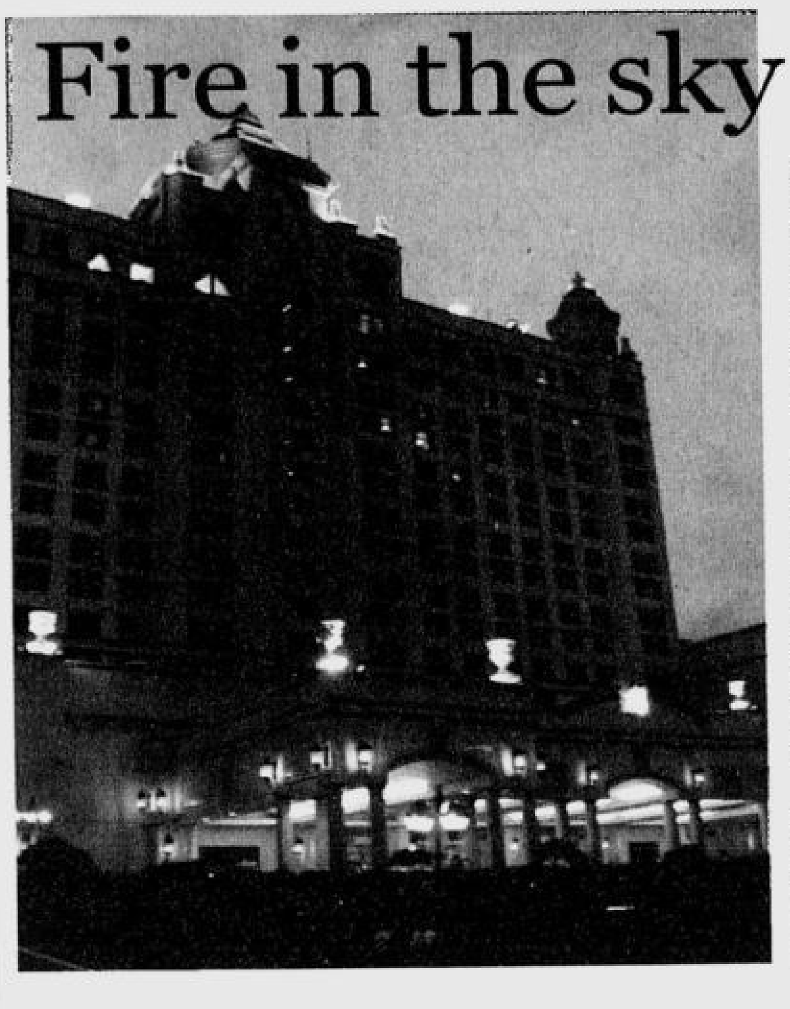
Fire in the sky at Waterfront



LEGEND HAS IT THAT BUDDHA asked all the animals to meet him on Chinese New Year. Twelve came, and Buddha named a year after each one, in the order that they arrived. The people born in each animal's year are said to have some of that animal's personality.

This Feb. 18 marks the beginning of the 4705th Chinese year, the Year of the Pig. Those born under the sign of the pig tend to be loving individuals who make loyal partners, and are highly regarded for their chivalry and pureness of heart. For pigs, 2007 is the year to shine, either personally or professionally, and pigs will overcome any recent setbacks or obstacles.

At the forefront of the longest and most important celebration in the Chinese calendar is Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino with food, fireworks and Chinese cultural presentations. On Feb. 17, the eve of the New Year, the celebration begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Lobby Lounge with a series of lion and dragon dances by the Plum Blossom Kung Fu Association of the Philippines - Cebu City's only traditional choy li fut, lion dancing and tai chi federation, and a martial arts exhibition to be led by Tai Chi master Li Bing Lei, Jet Li's stunt double in Hero. A stunning 8-minute fireworks extravaganza complements this exhilarating display of movement at 9 p.m. Treff offers a cocktail food buffet with a complimentary glass of wine as well as the hotel's best vantage point for the fireworks display at only P350+++. Tin Gow, the city's premier Chinese restaurant prepares special set menus deserving of such a momentous celebration.

Reservations are highly recommended; call 232-6888 local 8200 or 8201. Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino is located on Salinas Drive, Lahug.

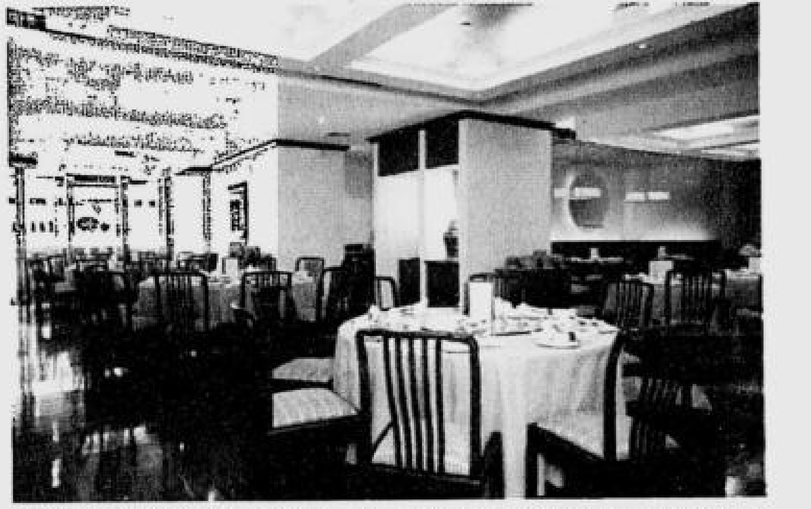
Fiesta San Miguel's band line-up

AFTER A HARD DAYS WORK, relax and unwind at the only "Resto-Brewery" in town - Fiesta San Miguel. Move and groove with some of the country's top bands performing nightly at Dusit Hotel Nikko's Fiesta San Miguel together with a cold mug of freshly brewed beer. It's retro night with 'Human Race' every Monday. The mood is R&B every Tuesday with 'Infinity Band'. 'In Heat' lets your adrenaline rush with its pop music every Wednesday. Enjoy the one of a kind repertoire of 'Natural High' on Thursdays. Laugh to your heart's content on Fridays with the comedy antics combined with superb music of 'Ministix's'. Saturday night is acoustic night with 'Sandilea band'. Nightly performances start at 9 p.m. onwards with no cover charge. Guests may enjoy unlimited servings of fresh brewed beer for only P350 net from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Fiesta San Miguel is located at the ground level of Dusit Hotel Nikko. For inquiries and reservations, please call 867-3333.

A celebration of good fortune and prosperity at the Century Park Hotel

USHER IN THE YEAR OF THE Golden Pig with the whole family and enjoy the exciting line-up of activities only at the Century Park Hotel. Deli Snack welcomes new year with good fortune with Chinese Rice Cakes and Chocolate Coins for sale at the lower lobby. Grab a bite for yourself or make it as a perfect gift. As an added treat, lucky charms and figurines are also available for sale from Feb. 21 starting 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Convene with family or friends and satisfy your appetite as you indulge in the specially prepared Chinese New Year menu at Café in the Park. Lunch and dinner buffet is on Feb. 17 to 18 for only P950++ for adults and P550++ for children (aged 12 years and below). Patron-host gets the chance to take home a Lucky Ang-Pao envelope. While professor Arnold Esguerra, Ph.D. of the University of the Philippines shares the insightful culture of Chinese and Korea through its scholarly gentry's set-up at Café in the Park. New Year celebration becomes more exciting with ceremonial dragon and lion dance with stilt-walker and eye dotting ceremony at the lower lobby on Feb. 17, Harrison Plaza parking lot and hotel entrance. The Atirum Lounge with the Philippine Institute of Quezon City Chinese Orchestra delights everyone with their live performance of Chinese music as everyone await in the ushering of the new year. For inquiries and reservations, call (632) 528-8888 or e-mail information@centurypark.com.ph.

Chinese New Year at Peony Garden



MANILA PAVILION HOTEL IS welcoming the Chinese New Year with a bang and a festival of great food. This February, let them hail another wave of authentic Malaysian-Cantonese cuisine bursting forth from the Peony Garden. Xin Nian Kuai Leh!

Start the Chinese New Year right and celebrate the promise of prosperity for 2007 with this palatable selection: thai shaw pan-fried chicken, braised abalone with triple mushrooms, dried meat fried rice, steamed lapu-lapu chuo chow style, fu kwei pig's knuckles with chinese herb, stuffed dried oyster, dried meat with bean curd, stuffed taro suckling pig, butter and milk lobster, sha pho seafood shark's fin.

You and your family may choose among three private rooms with different seating capacities: Peach - for a group of 10 persons, Lotus - for a group of 12 and Sunflower - for a group of 15 persons.

Xin Nian Kuai Leh offer runs from Feb. 12 to 18. Lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. while dinner is at 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

For inquiries and reservations, please call Manila Pavilion Hotel at (02) 526-1212 extension 2503 and 2296.

Fridays at the Taal Vista Hotel

HEAD TO TAGAYTAY CITY ON Fridays and have a feast at the Taal Vista Hotel with its riveting culinary treats at the Lobby Lounge – the Indian Night Buffet and the Wine and Cheese Club. The Indian Night Buffet is every Friday starting at 6 p.m. up to 10 p.m. Get a taste of the Chicken Tandoori, the Lamb Rogargout, or the Beef Curry with Coconut Cream. Priced at P390++ and half price for the kids aged 6-12 years old, it includes one round of softdrinks, iced tea or lemonade. For the wine enthusiasts, check out the the Wine and Cheese Club and experience the best of the best of wines and cheeses. Every last Friday of the month, different selections of wine are served while the distributors give a background about them. Starting at 6:30 p.m. meet and greet fellow wine enthusiasts, have a cozy conversation and relax by the Lobby Lounge fireplace while enjoying fantastic wines and delectable cheeses. Priced at P495 net for food, this is inclusive of free wine. The Taal Vista Hotel is where your Fridays should be. It is owned by the SM Investments Corp and managed by the Fuego Hotels and Properties Corp.

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Murphy's dream gig is to deliver Oscar speech

MURPHY, as soul singer James "Thunder" Early, performs with the Dreams.

LOS ANGELES—IT'S a dramatic shift, when funny men turn serious. Even Eddie Murphy, the latest of Hollywood's top comic performers to try, has had some laughs over his own transformation, which could bring him an Academy Award.

At the Screen Actors Guild awards, where he won yet another supporting-actor prize for "Dreamgirls" amid the buildup to Oscar night, Murphy copped a British accent as he soberly remarked how honored he was to be recognized by his peers.

Goofy

Murphy could not keep the wise guy with the broad grin in check for more than a few seconds, though. "No, I'm sorry," Murphy said after a moment, cracking up with laughter. "It's just when the British people come and get the awards, it's so smooth with their stuff. And I feel goofy up here, 'cause I don't be winning stuff."

And most comic actors don't be winning stuff like an Oscar when they turn in a worthy serious performance. Some, like Will Smith, Dan Aykroyd and Bill Murray, at least can get nominated. Others, such as Steve Martin, Jim Carrey or Adam Sandler, never get that far.

Dramatic role

Yet, Murphy looks as though he will follow "Dreamgirls" co-star Jamie Foxx, the best-actor recipient two years ago, as an actor who started in comedy and made good with a dramatic role.

Murphy also won the Golden Globe and Critics' Choice awards as supporting actor for "Dreamgirls," a role that let him cut loose with a twist on his blistering James Brown impersonation from his stand-up and "Saturday Night Live" days.

As 1960s and '70s soul singer James "Thunder" Early, Murphy also displays a dark side, portraying with tragic restraint a doomed man whose desires to venture beyond his showy pop persona are thwarted.

Most resilient

It's not as though Murphy was revealing some inner pain he's been carrying since he shot to celebrity at age 19 on "Saturday Night Live" and became one of the most resilient movie stars of modern times.

"I can't relate to the tragic side of Jimmy Early. I am the closest you can get to having a charmed existence in this town," Murphy, 45, told Associated Press Television News.

Unlike comedic roles that might benefit from his improvisational wit, "Dreamgirls" had Murphy sticking largely to the script. "I was in completely uncharted waters doing a movie like this, so I wasn't as quick to improvise, because they are not going for the joke," Murphy told APTN.

"My character has some moments when he is funny, but he is really this tragic figure, how he winds up. He is kind of cool and charismatic in the beginning, but he wasn't really supposed to be that funny, so I wasn't doing a lot of improvising."

Turmoil in Murphy's private life clearly helped him capture Early's anguish, "Dreamgirls" director Bill Condon said. During filming, Murphy was enduring the breakup of his 12-year marriage.

"No question, he was being wiped out emotionally," Condon said. "He would talk about the fact he was glad to have to channel some of this into the part and how he almost wished he was doing a completely serious, full-on drama, because he could take all that pain and channel it there."

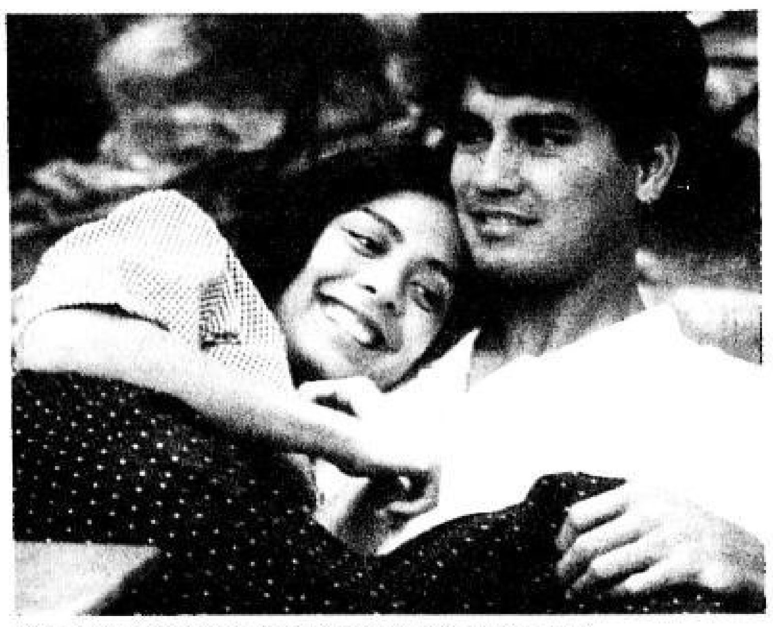
Flops

After establishing himself as one of the biggest box-office draws of the 1980s and early 1990s with "48 Hrs.," "Trading Places," "Coming to America" and the first two "Beverly Hills Cops" flicks, Murphy has seesawed through hits and flops for more than a decade.

He has also had his share of public embarrassment, including a 1997 incident in which police pulled him over after he picked up a transsexual prostitute. (Murphy said he was just being nice and giving the person a ride.)

In December, a paternity feud erupted after Murphy said he was unsure if he was the father of ex-girlfriend Melanie Brown's unborn child. Brown, formerly of the Spice Girls, said Murphy is the father.

AP



ZULUETA and Gomez in "Hihintayin Kita sa Langit."

Season for new versions of hit productions

From page H1

lightweight a thespic talent to "deserve" to play Ate Vi's part.

Vilma hastened to assure her loyal followers that Rica did have what it took to do justice to her acclaimed role, so it looks like the series will see the light of TV day. But Rica had better do her darnedest as a TV thespian to turn the doubting Thomases into fans, or else she won't hear the end of it.

Viability

Another TV show that's being revived on the tube is the 10-handerkerchief weeper, "Flordeluna." The jury is still out on the viability of this new version, so we'll have to watch it regularly to determine the verdict.

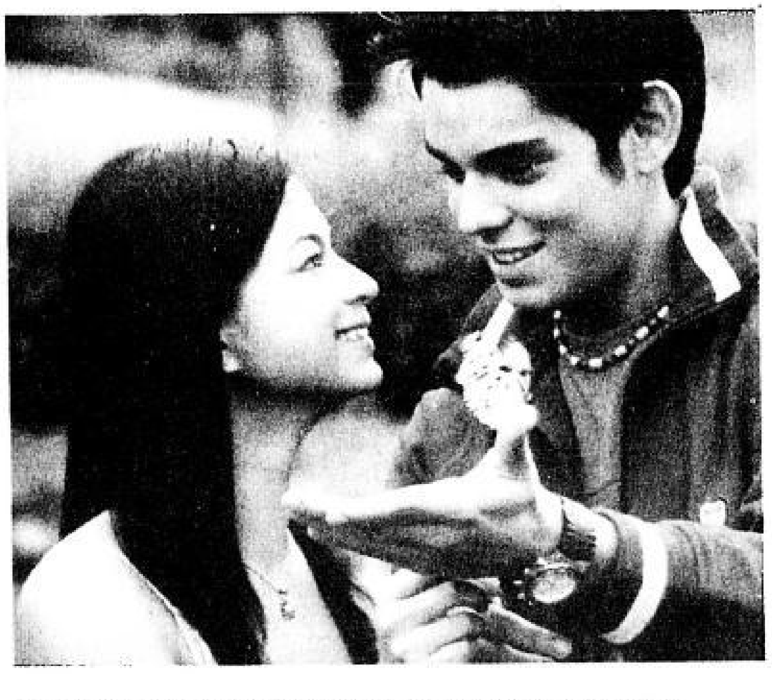
One thing is sure, however: Its new child title-role player will have her work cut out for her to match Janice de Belen's portrayal and impact in the original show.

Back to "The Promise": Its follow-up gambit is similarly a dodgy proposition because "Hihintayin Kita sa Langit," which was shot in Batanes, was one of the most visually thrilling movies the year it was shown.

Another plus point was the fact that Richard and Dawn were a romantic item in real life, so the "chemistry" they exuded was both heightened and unique. Can Richard and Angel approximate their breathless, passionate portrayals, even if they aren't an "item" in real life? Well, they'd better give it everything they've got, or else they'll be unfairly compared to the earlier film's photogenically love-besotted leads!

Even in Hollywood, old hits are being revived by way of new versions or updates: Sylvester Stallone is giving his signature character, Rocky, another go in middle-age by way of "Rocky Balboa." Similarly, "Ocean's 13" is the latest update on "Ocean's 11," which in 1960 originally topbilled Frank Sinatra and other character members of Hollywood's Rat Pack.

And "Nancy Drew" was first filmed in 1939, then in 1950, and it's being produced anew for the big screen, this time with Emma Thompson playing the title role.



LOCSIN and Gutierrez in "The Promise," the latest local film inspired by "Wuthering Heights."

NICOLAS CAGE IS UNDER-UTILIZED IN 'GHOST RIDER'

By Noelani Torre

CAGE'S "blazing" character becomes a bounty hunter for the devil.

DIRECTOR MARK STEVEN JOHNSON ("Daredevil" and "Elektra") once again helms another Sony Pictures superhero flick, "Ghost Rider," and it makes you wonder about what the studio's execs are thinking. After all, wasn't "Daredevil" positively dreary at worst and underwhelming at best? And wasn't "Elektra" an out-and-out disaster?

One can only suppose that perhaps they wanted to give Johnson a shot at redeeming himself. But, he squanders his chance in the virtually thrill-less "Ghost Rider." Oh, it's more or less enjoyable enough. The effects are good, and you have to give Nicolas Cage credit for trying to flesh out his skeletal character, but, like "Daredevil," the film doesn't really have much of an impact.

Myth and fable

Simply put, Johnson is not a good storyteller. Superhero stories are closely related to myth and fable, both of which need to be told in a strong, convincing voice in order to work. "Ghost Rider" has no such voice.

On the good side, humor is used well in the film. Cage and Eva Mendes have good on-screen chemistry. Cage, however, is woefully under-utilized—he simply wasn't given enough material to work with, notwithstanding his undoubted thespic capabilities.

Motorcycle stuntman Johnny Blaze, Cage's character in this film, becomes a bounty hunter for the devil (Mephistopheles) by striking a bargain (his immortal soul) in exchange for the life of his dying father.

Years later, Blaze runs into the woman he left behind (now a reporter) and Mephistopheles, who offers him his soul back *if* he agrees to become the supernatural Ghost Rider.

More horrible

His charge is to defeat Blackheart, Mephistopheles' son and would-be usurper in hell, who is bent on creating a new hell that promises to be even more horrible than the current one. In the end, he vows to work against, not for, the devil!

There are a lot of action scenes, but there's no real action. The whole movie exhibits a noticeable lack of breathtaking scenes which, needless to say, are necessary for mythic films such as this to be able to make an impact.

Nick nixes childhood obesity

From page H4

Probe Media Foundation and Unicef.

Tribute to Tito Arevalo

Ang Tribung Pilipino Foundation and NCCA pay tribute to Tito Arevalo at 4 p.m. on Feb. 22 at the NCCA Bldg., Gen. Luna St., Intramuros. Arevalo was a noted composer, lyricist, musical director and actor, and was the recipient of Maria Clara, Famas, FAP and Natatanging Gawad Urian honors.

At Ayala Malls Cinemas

Oscars frontrunners "Last King of Scotland," "Letters from Iwo Jima" and "Notes on A Scandal" will be should exclusively at Ayala Mall cinemas (starting Feb. 21 with "The Last King of Scotland"). "Letters" opens on Feb. 28, while "Notes" is set for a March 7 opening.

Promise fulfilled

Singing sensation Lani Misalucha takes time out from her Flamingo Hotel engagement in Las Vegas to sing tonight at the Araneta Coliseum. She will also perform on "ASAP" tomorrow, and kick off her mall tour at SM Megamall to promote her new "Lani Misalucha" album.

MISALUCHA. On promo tour for her new album.

At Enchanted Kingdom

The Join the Club band will entertain visitors at Enchanted Kingdom at 4 p.m. tomorrow. Their sound is an amalgam of everything campy—'70s, rock, Beach Boy sounds and Sex Pistols. Call 631-0939.

'Kumustahan' TV Special

Tomight at 7 p.m. on GMA QTV 11, watch out for the "Kumustahan" TV special hosted by Nanette Inventor, which provides a glimpse of how our musical artists have entertained and given joy to Filipinos in Europe and the Middle East.

The concert tour and TV special are sponsored by Western Union, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Yehey.com, GMA Pinoy TV, Mac-Graphic Carranz Advertising, JobStreet.com, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa), Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), Department of Tourism, Hospitality Staff Philippines Inc., and Star Events.

Windfall of renewed affection

From page H4

performance of "Peter Pan" at the CCP. Tita enjoyed the child-friendly show even if she was 80 rather the eight years old—a testament to her abiding sense of wonder.

From the CCP, we drove to the LRI bldg. on Reposo St. in Makati City, for won events "starring" other old friends—George Sison was launching his inspirational book on winning, and Ernie Garcia's latest art exhibit was scheduled to open at a venue close by.

It turned out that the entire building was marking its third anniversary, so each venue offered wine and munchies to guests, adding immeasurably to the general feeling of artistic bonhomie.

Since we arrived early, Tita surveyed some furniture and crafts shops in the building, and ended up buying a stunning T'boli necklace that we urged her to wear to the next show biz function she would attend (perhaps Mowelfund's tribute to some veteran stars later this month?).

At 6 p.m., we asked some kind gentlemen to help us lift Tita and her wheelchair up many steps to the building's second floor. George and Ernie were thrilled to see Tita gracing their twin events, and Mandy Navasero invited us to her photo studio in the same building for some wine and winsome recollections of friendly times gone by.

SISON. Recently launched new inspirational book.

The evening went swimmingly, but we had a final engagement to attend, so we drove all the way to Blumentritt in Manila for sculptor Ramon Orlina's birthday party. Ramon has many friends, so his well-appointed house was full of good cheer.

We stayed with Tita on the ground floor and enjoyed the party "by osmosis." Then it was really time to call it a night, so we drove home, feeling all warm and tingly with the weekend's memories of old friends rediscovered, and new friendships forged.

Banderas eager to expand directing career

BANDERAS. Has learned a great deal from many of the directors he's worked with.

BERLIN—ANTONIO BANDERAS said recently his second stint at the helm of a movie, a coming-of-age piece set in his native Malaga, had sharpened his appetite to spend more time directing.

Speaking at a news conference at the Berlin film festival after a screening of the film, in Spanish "El Camino de los Ingleses" and in English "Summer Rain," Banderas said he was also likely to be the writer on the next project he undertakes.

Portrayal

As an actor, he is known for his portrayal of Zorro and his voice role as Puss in Boots in "Shrek 2" and he made his debut as a director with 1999's "Crazy in Alabama," starring his wife, Melanie Griffith.

"Summer Rain" premiered in Spain in November and describes the loves and conflicts of a group of teenage boys in Malaga, southern Spain, in the late 1970s as they make the sometimes painful transition to adulthood.

"At this time in my life, I feel much more myself when I am directing," Banderas, 46, told reporters. "I don't want seven years to pass between this latest movie and the next one. Probably, a realistic time for me would be three years."

Deeply personal

"Summer Rain" is based on Antonio Soler's prize-winning Spanish novel and Banderas said the project was a deeply personal one inspired by his hometown, his native country and his past.

Banderas also took on the challenge partly because he was tired of acting: "I don't want to say I renounce acting in movies. I want to continue doing them," he said. "But they were movies that didn't allow me to express everything I had inside."

Wearing a white T-shirt and with his long, black hair tied back in a ponytail, Banderas explained how he had learned a great deal from many of the directors he had worked with.

"I don't try to follow any director, in particular," he said, adding that he had closely observed Brian De Palma at work directing him in the 2002 film, "Femme Fatale."

75 movies

"Obviously, I have learned a lot of things from many directors over the years, and I have done 75 movies, so I have a lot of people to pick from," he said.

Banderas' hugely successful acting career was launched mainly in the films of Oscar-winning Spanish director Pedro Almodovar in the 1980s.

His first big success in English was in Jonathan Demme's 1993 film "Philadelphia" in which he played a lover of Tom Hanks' AIDS-infected lawyer.

Venture

Banderas said "Summer Rain" was part of a venture he had started with Spanish production company Green Moon which aims to help young actors and filmmakers.

"The project is not designed just to produce movies for me to direct. It's designed to also help people who don't have the opportunity to get behind the camera," he said. "In 'Summer Rain' I was the producer too and we want to continue on that path."

"We are inviting people to send us whatever they wrote, short movies they have done, in order to give them the opportunity to make it work and to tell their story."

Reuters

Windfall of renewed affection

By Nestor U. Torre

AVELLANA. Feted at the CCP on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

LAST MONTH, WE PAID FRIENDSHIP ITS due by attending events that honored some old colleagues and other well-loved people. We started off on Jan. 26 by taking theater legend Tita Muñoz to the CCP tribute to National Artist for Theater Daisy Avellana, on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

Anyone who reaches 90 years of age deserves a celebration, but when you're the much-loved Daisy, the festivities should be truly special. And that's what the CCP and the NCCA whipped up for theater's First Lady, with standout actresses like Baby Barredo and Daisy's daughter Ivi Cosio (and lone "thorn" among the roses Behn Cervantes) performing monologues from Daisy's past dramatic vehicles.

Even better, the occasion provided a welcome opportunity for old friends to reestablish links that could lead to a strengthening of their bonds.

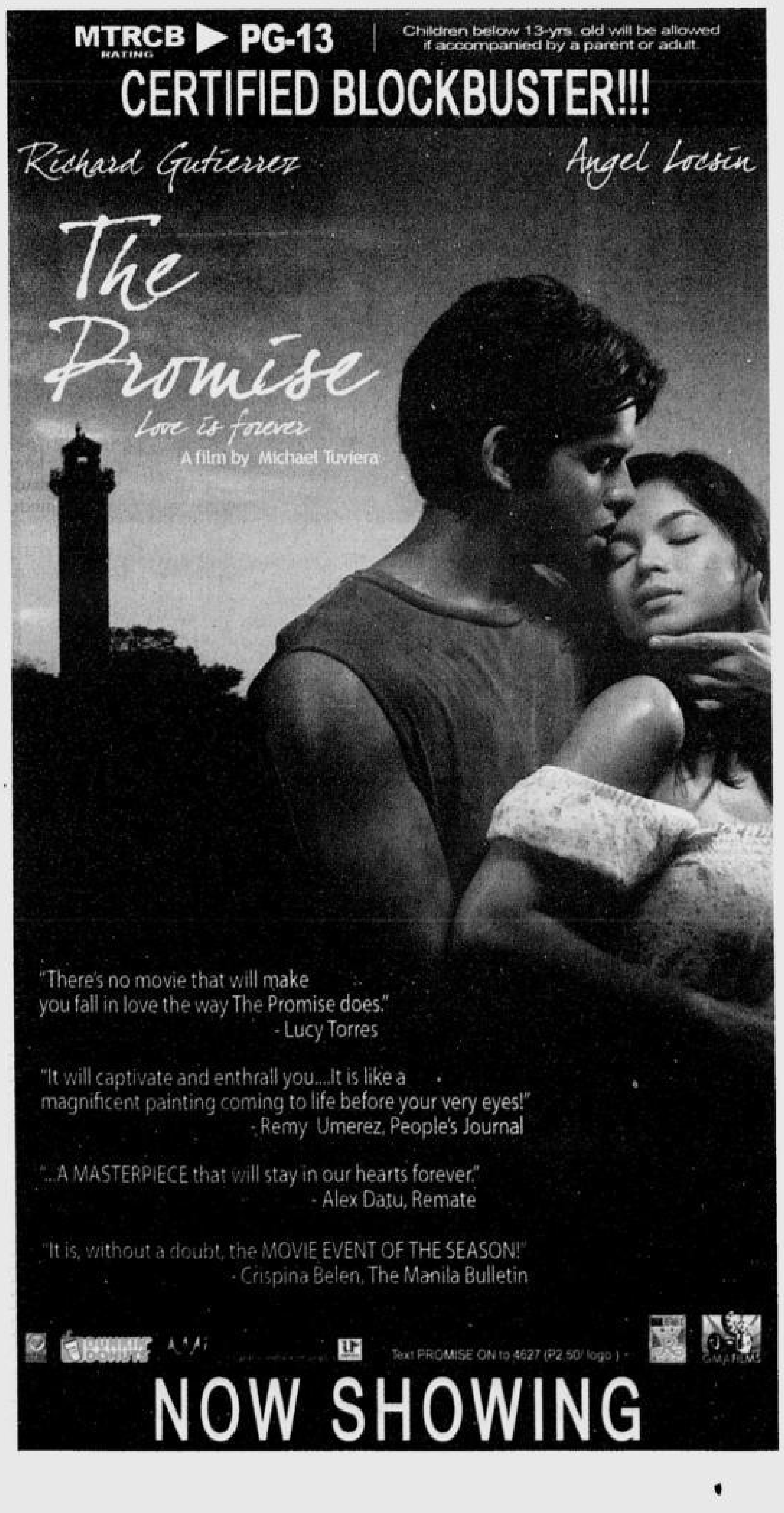
Thus, we were happy to see Tita meeting up again with *three* National Artists—Eddie Romero, Arturo Luz and Bien Lumbera, plus Gemma Cruz Araneta, Tessie Luz, Moises Sia, Joel Lamangan, Monino Duque, Alan Cosio, Maan Hontiveros, Ama Quiambao, Cecile Guidote Alvarez, Rustica Carpio, Mandy Navasero, Fides Cuyugan Asencio, Mars Cavestany, Frank Rivera—etc!

—What a windfall of renewed affection! We trust that Tita's friends will call her up soon so they can keep the good times going again.

The following day, we had an even fuller schedule, again as consort to the wheelchair-bound but still free-spirited Tita. Our day started at 2 p.m. with a

WINDFALL/ H3

TITA Muñoz (left) with Behn Cervantes (right) and other well-wishers. PHOTOS BY MANDY NAVASERO



MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 | Children below 13-yrs. old will be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.

CERTIFIED BLOCKBUSTER!!!

Richard Gutierrez Angel Locsin

The Promise
Love is forever
A film by Michael Tuviera

"There's no movie that will make you fall in love the way The Promise does."
- Lucy Torres

"It will captivate and enthrall you....It is like a magnificent painting coming to life before your very eyes!"
- Remy Umerez, People's Journal

"...A MASTERPIECE that will stay in our hearts forever."
- Alex Datu, Remate

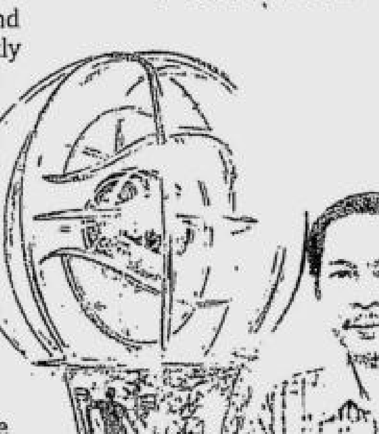
"It is, without a doubt, the MOVIE EVENT OF THE SEASON!"
- Crispina Belen, The Manila Bulletin

Text PROMISE ON to 4627 (P2.50/ logo)

NOW SHOWING

Nick nixes childhood obesity

MONTAGE



ORLINA with the beautiful and dynamic trophy he sculpted for the PBA.

NICKELODEON AND MTVN KIDS and Family Group president Cyma Zarghani joined US President and Mrs. Bush and other officials recently at the White House to discuss the current campaign against childhood obesity.

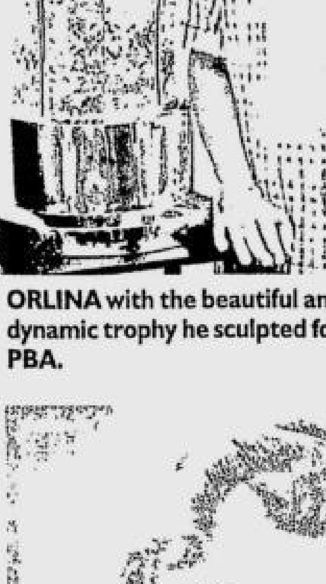
Recently, the Ad Council, Dreamworks SKG, Nickelodeon and others launched a new series of public service spots designed to help prevent childhood obesity. The infomercials feature characters from the movie, "Shrek"

Nickelodeon premiered the Shrek "Be A Player" spot last Feb. 1 and will air it throughout the year as part of the network's ongoing "Let's Just Play" campaign, which strives to encourage kids and families to make healthy lifestyle choices.

The network has committed $30 million and 10 percent of its nonprogrammed airtime to health and wellness messaging. In November 2005, "Let's Just Play" entered into a partnership with the Alliance for Healthier Generation to combat the spread of childhood obesity, coming up with the Let's Play Go Healthy Challenge. To date, nearly 2,000 kids have pledged to "go healthy."

'Home Is Where the Art Is'

Silverlens Gallery (816-0044) announces the opening of JJ-Christine Villamin's "Home Is Where the Art Is" photo collage exhibit, on Feb. 22 (the exhibit runs until March 23). Traveler, performer, cinematographer, director and once-hesitant photographer Villamin creates an exhibit bursting with color and humor seldom seen in usual travel photographs. Email manage@silverlensphoto.com.



AREVALO. Noted composer, lyricist, musial director and actor.

'Kabul Express'

Kabir Khan's acclaimed film, "Kabul Express," will be shown at Robinsons Galleria from Feb. 21 to 27. It tells the story of five people from different worlds whose paths cross in a country devastated by war.

The lead characters are an Afghani driver and guide, a New York-based American journalist, a Pakistani journalist, and two Indian journalists.

The reporters have entered Afghanistan to get a rare interview with a Talibani. They are blindfolded, taken to secret hideouts, are nearly trampled on by horses, get kidnapped at gunpoint—and definitely get much more than they bargained for!

Perpetual trophy

Last Feb. 9, the PBA presented its new perpetual trophy by noted sculptor Ramon G. Orlina during the first round of the 2006-2007 championship games at Araneta Coliseum.

The beautiful and dynamic trophy is meant to be passed on like a torch by one year's champions to the next. Vying for the championship—and the prized trophy—this season are sister teams, San Miguel Beer and Barangay Ginebra.

Delirious?

Carrying on its tradition of globally relevant music, Delirious? returns with the DVD-CD album, "Delirious? Now Is the Time: Live at Willow Creek." The album's 15 tracks of inspiring music have enhanced worship worldwide. It also includes a 30-minute feature on the band and its performance at Willow Creek.

'Kabataan X-Press'

On Channel 2 at 7:50 a.m. today, "Kabataan X-Press" features tattoos, teenagers as market loaders, and robberies involving sacred images. The program is produced by the Kabataan News Network, a 12-bureau organization composed of youth reporters, and is a joint project of

NICK/ H3